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[HER EYES GAVE HIM PERMISSION TO DO WHAT HE DARED NOT DO WITHOUT IT.]

## THE HEARTS OF THREE GOOD WOMEN.

BY PIERRE LECLERQ.

### CHAPTER XX.

"I WILL NOT GIVE YOU IN RETURN—A BLOW."

We come now to Godrey's second grand discovery, which we record in this place because it was shortly after saying that last "good night" to Miss Witchwood that he for the first time acknowledged to himself that that discovery was made; that the thing concealed but now revealed was a fact beyond dispute.

We have said that he went to his room with a heavy heart.

He locked the door, paced the floor thoughtfully, opened the window and looked out. It was a dark night, but he gazed in the direction of the Priory.

He thought, among a thousand other thoughts, of the first morning when he had surveyed the

surrounding country by daylight as he surveyed it now for the last time by night.

He closed the window; he took off his collar and necktie and changed the dress coat of the just-ending new life for the velvet jacket of his by-gone blackguardism. He took the lamp from the dressing-table and placed it on a small writing-table which stood by the window.

He cut some note paper into half sheets and then with a deep sigh seated himself at the small writing-table and commenced to write. He sat there for nearly an hour writing with great rapidity—his face pale, his mouth quivering, his hand trembling.

At the end of that time the half sheets were filled, his manuscript was finished. He had chronicled in unstudied words the second grand discovery. He had translated into man's language the language of his heart.

For some few moments he gazed somewhat vacantly at the half sheets which were scattered over the table before him. As many other men have done he considered whether it would not be better to burn what he had written. He decided at last to let the half sheets live. An odd life he had determined for them—burial.

He collected the half sheets in order, and then took from a drawer a small pen-knife of Annie's and a piece of blue ribbon, which had once bound

Annie's hair. He cut off a piece of the blue ribbon, dug the penknife through the left-hand corner of the paper, and passing the ribbon through the holes made by the penknife fastened the half sheets together. He folded his manuscript once, then wound the remaining piece of ribbon round it and tied it in a knot.

He looked at the little manuscript for a moment as he held it in his open hand almost affectionately and very sadly, and then he placed it in the pocket of his overcoat and signed a sigh of profound relief.

He had chronicled the second grand discovery.

Let us learn what that discovery is by reading his manuscript, and so learn more of the internal Godrey.

Thus, then, ran Godrey's manuscript:

"In less than twelve hours I shall bid adieu to Pondcourt House for ever; in less than fifteen I shall meet again the good little creature whom—not without strong resistance on my side—I have wronged. If I have sinned by wronging her may Heaven forgive me—whether I have sinned or not may Heaven help me to keep from my poor Annie a knowledge of that wrong. Sin or no sin I will chastise myself by writing here the wrong I have done her. Her very life

is one love-thought of wretched, worthless me—wretched and worthless because of my vile inconstancy. When I came here, only a few weeks since, though it seems long years, I loved her far more dearly than my life—almost as dearly as she, dear child, loved me. That love, which I imagined only death could end, has passed away within one month.

"With that love has passed away the boyhood of which it formed so prominent a part. My Annie—still and always mine—shall never know this. I will learn to hush the whisperings and conceal the secrets of my heart when she is near; will clothe the strong brotherly love, which is all the love I have for her, in the habit of the old dead Godfrey's love, the love of the lover. I will marry her, I will forsake the truth and swear to her that she has all my love, that I am happy. Let my life from now be one huge lie, so that my Annie's life may be one joy. I have stolen from her the love I gave her in return for hers, and I am too great a coward to blight her life and own the wretched thief.

"May you, my bright little woman-child, live on in the thought that you retain the fickle thing you prize so dearly; may you never lose faith in Godfrey as Godfrey has lost it in himself. My pretty sister-wife! You found me sorely in need of love and care and kindness, and you gave them me. You have often laughed and called yourself my second mother; you, childish and innocent as you are, gradually taught me to walk on a path which you lit by your love from bad to good. I will not give you in return—a blow.

"The boy's love is dead—it was transient. The man's love is born—it is eternal. All the fascinations which won the boy's love fade into rapid frivolities before the heavenly graces of the being I love now. Annie was a pleasing, pretty toy. She is a woman devoid of woman's blemishes; to know her is education—to love her is religion."

"And—strongly as I have resisted it and struggled to beat it back as with soft, stealthy steps it neared and intoxicated my senses—I dare to love this masterpiece of Heaven's; I dare to turn from Annie, of whom I am unworthy, and worship this perfect being of whom no man is worthy.

"Gradually has the knowledge that I love her dawned upon me—the formation of the passion itself, which verges on idolatry, has been gradual too. Commencing with deep admiration of her bodily loveliness—from that to admiration far more deep of the refined beauty of her mind—then to an admiration of the pure virtue which lights her face, her words and acts. Mingling together these filled me with one holy sentiment—profound respect—an intense passion slumbering. Then on a sudden there darted into respect the sweet, mysterious spark—the strange and unaccountable spirit of love, which woke profound respect and gave it life and breath and chapped it into love—love which is sinful because of its greatness; love which stands between my God and me; love which I cannot sever from religion; love—Heaven save me!—which makes me pray to Him THROUGH HER.

"Miss Witchwood! Miss Witchwood! The two words are to me as poetry. An echo answers from my heart when I speak that name or hear it spoken. Looking at that name, where I have written it upon this page, it seems as some sweet thought expressed in a mysterious language which I alone can understand.

"How irresistible is her power over me! A word from her turns certainty into doubt, a fact into a dream. One glance from her shatters what in the past seemed right to me, and shows me the true right—right as she sees it. She has peopled my brain with new thoughts, has clothed the world, humanity, and all inanimate things in fresh clothes, sweeter and purer than those in which I knew them first, has made me look into my soul—has introduced me to myself.

"I have loved with open eyes to dream of her, to picture myself as sacrificing my life to give her a moment's joy, or to save her a moment's pain. I have loved to imagine her gratitude or pity. Selfishly I have thought that I could

willingly resign my life but to behold those heaven-like eyes shedding one tear for me.

"Though it is hopeless, though it is a wrong to Annie, though my future existence must be embittered, I glory in my love. To think that I might have died without knowing her, and through knowing her, myself, is a more bitter thought than any even my deep sadness can fashion to distress me. I am proud of my love. I have nursed the passion as though it were an ailing child of mine, have delighted in studying all its strange intricacies, the alterations it has made in me, the effect of each of her countless beauties on my heart. I am proud of my passion, am proud to be the strange, isolated creature it has made me, am proud in being the result of a cause which springs from her. My worship of Miss Witchwood is a double love. I love the love I bear her.

"To what end am I writing this? The gratification of a whim. My adoration of her is too powerful a passion for me to bear alone, yet I could not nor dare not confide it to any being of the present. The words I have written are badly chosen, the ideas which flit through my brain come too quickly and give place to others too rapidly to allow me to express them all, while even those that I can seize are far beyond my power to translate into words. The words I write are real. I feel that, should they ever be perused, I, my love, and the million words unwritten here will be understood. Let the being of posterity, whose eyes first fall on this, learn from these words that man can love.

"In her library there is a book which tells of how a learned Benedictine burned with love, how he confessed it to himself, to God, and earth, to himself in his lonely den, to God in his wild, lamenting prayers, to earth by burying in its breast the written revelations of the love he deemed unholy.

"As he buried the story of his fierce passion under the ground on which his abbey stood, so will I bury the grand secret of my life under the ground of the Priory ruins.

"May God forgive me if I love too greatly. May God watch over and protect His grandest work—Miss Witchwood!"

And with that blessing Godfrey's extraordinary manuscript ended.

The last morning came, and brought with it a large share of that dirty white fog which had enveloped Pondcourt when he first arrived there. When Godfrey, after spending a sleepless night, entered the breakfast-room he found Miss Witchwood, Mrs. Barrycourt, and, to his astonishment, Miss Elworth, already assembled and waiting breakfast for him.

Eve had entreated her aunt to allow her to partake with Godfrey of that last meal, and Miss Witchwood had granted the request.

Miss Witchwood appeared to be in unusually good spirits. She chatted and smiled and laughed from the beginning to the end of the breakfast, and when it was over superintended herself the forwarding to the railway station of Godfrey's luggage, Godfrey having previously announced his intention of walking there whether the morning should prove wet or fine.

When breakfast was over and it only wanted twenty minutes to the time of Godfrey's departure from the house, Miss Witchwood observed more sadness even than there had been for the last few days in Eve's astounding calmness. She placed her hand on her niece's shoulder with apparent lightness, and said to her:

"We must not take liberties with our approaching convalescence, if you please, Eve. You are not quite well yet, you know, and, at the risk of being uncivil to Mr. Overside, I must get you back to your own room and imprison you there for the remainder of the day. Come."

And with her hand now resting rather heavily on Eve's shoulder, Miss Witchwood signed to Godfrey. He approached and held out his hand to Eve, who turned a shade paler as he did so. Miss Witchwood tightened her hold of Eve's shoulder. Eve shook Godfrey's hand.

Miss Witchwood signed to him to make no parting speech.

"Good bye, Miss Elworth," he said, shaking

her hand heartily, and thinking that her hand was strangely cold.

In a voice far colder than her hand and calmer than the expression on her face, she said:

"Good bye, Mr. Overside."

To herself she added "And God bless you," and then she suffered her aunt to lead her from that room into her own, where, at least, her grief need not be made more bitter by vain attempts to conceal it.

During their absence from the room one of Miss Witchwood's duties was performed by Mrs. Barrycourt. It was eminently unlike Miss Witchwood to appoint a deputy, yet her so doing was an agreeable surprise to Godfrey. He had bothered himself more than once about the (to him) extreme unpleasantness of actually receiving money from Miss Witchwood's hands.

Mrs. Barrycourt, and not Miss Witchwood, handed over to Godfrey his month's salary.

Five minutes earlier than he had intended he left the house. Miss Witchwood put on a hat and shawl and accompanied him through the dirty white fog as far as the iron gate-way. He kept his face away from her eyes—he seemed to be walking on air.

At the iron gate-way they stopped.

"I think you are sorry to leave us," she said, throwing the shawl half over her face, because of the fog. "You are like me—you detest all partings. Let us get through this as quickly as we can. I wish you all good wishes. I wish," with an odd smile, "all good wishes to Mrs. Overside. I may perhaps trouble you with a letter concerning my niece—it may interest you to know how she proceeds after this unfortunate affair. Do you care to hear from me?"

"If you please, Miss Witchwood."

"When I want anything done for me in London I may rely on your doing it, if I ask you, may I not?"

"Anything in the world, Miss Witchwood."

They spoke no other words at parting—not even the words "good bye." For a moment they stood there saying nothing, doing nothing. Miss Witchwood was the first to move.

Suddenly she extended both her hands. He took them in his own. She looked him full in the face—there was an earnest expression in her eyes, which made them more than beautiful—a frank, bright smile lit her face radiantly. In the mute language of her attitude she said "God speed you, friend!"

As he clasped her hands she with the rapidity of lightning spoke to him again—though this time in the silent language of her eyes. In this way she seemed to cast a momentary glance at her own hands as they lay in his. Only from her could such a glance be understood, only coming from her could it lose its boldness in the grace in which it came, in the pure sisterly affection which gave it birth.

Her eyes gave him permission to do what he dared not do without it. As he stooped, he thought, how frequently in the future he would recall that exquisite moment of the present.

Tears filled his eyes—he hid them from her. One instant and he was gone, but in that one always remembered instant he availed himself of the sweet permission her eyes had given him.

He threw his love, his prayers, and his last word into a kiss, and reverentially imprinted it upon Miss Witchwood's hands.

## CHAPTER XXI.

"ONE THOUSAND THREE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-TWO."

THERE were two distinct ways of going from Pondcourt House to Pondcourt Railway Station. Godfrey hurried away from Pondcourt House, after kissing Miss Witchwood's hands, along the road that touched the base of the little eminence which bore the Priory ruins on its summit.

He was utterly miserable. His youth seemed to have deserted him. Now that he had left Pond-



court House never to return, that idea that he was unsubstantial and frivolous left him. He felt dreadfully grave and dreadfully old. He scarcely knew which of his two griefs was the more bitter—leaving Miss Witchwood or meeting Miss Sheene, never seeing Miss Witchwood again, or having in the future to always deceive Miss Sheene. He was, we repeat, utterly miserable.

He told himself that art was still left to him. He built, experimentally, as he had often built before, a castle of air, which showed him as a great popular painter. The effect of the experiment was dispiriting. He could build the airy castle as vividly as heretofore, but he could derive no pleasure from the contemplation of it.

No! there was but one joy left to him. By successfully hiding his secret he could give happiness to Annie.

He ascended the little hill. All was silent—all was enveloped in the dirty white fog.

It took a very short time to gratify that whim of his, for the ground was dry and chalky and no one was in sight. Just by what had been the farm-house—just under a spot which Miss Witchwood's foot had touched in turning over for inspection a curious stone, he buried the little manuscript that was fastened by Annie's hair-ribbon.

There remained no traces that the ground had been disturbed. The earth gave every promise that it would keep secret for many years the storm which raged within him, but the merest particle of which was chronicled on those half sheets.

So he buried his secret, smiled sadly at his own folly, and then descended the hill and made for the station.

He started from Pondcourt at eleven o'clock precisely.

Immediately the train moved he experienced a sense of relief. Pondcourt instantly became of the past. He had postponed thinking thoroughly on the immediate future till Pondcourt was at his back. It was at his back now. Annie and B— Junction were facing him, he was travelling to them.

The present was not the time for vain regrets then, but it was the time for settling on what his conduct was to be at the coming meeting with Annie.

She, who was so quick sighted, would immediately detect a difference in his behaviour to her if he were not careful. She who understood instinctively, as it were, all concerning the man she loved, would learn his secret from the coldness of his kiss.

It was a hard, bitter task, this rehearsal in the train, of the deception he was about to practise on her. It would be far more difficult to deceive her than he had at first imagined, when he swore to himself to keep her for ever in ignorance of his secret.

He felt that by dint of great efforts he could act and speak and gaze on her after the manner of the dead Godfrey, but she was a very woman, and would quickly feel that the indescribable "something" was missing from his acts, his words and looks.

It would be quite easy to press her hand even more tightly than before, but it would not be so easy to send fluttering a joy-giving thrill from his hand to her heart.

It is easy to deceive a woman who deems herself the best of women, but it is not easy to deceive a woman who deems you the best of men.

These and a thousand other equally distressing thoughts occurred to Godfrey during that journey, and although the train was a slow one it neared B— Junction far too rapidly for him.

"A few weeks since," he said to himself, very bitterly, "and I cried because I was leaving her, now I could find it in my heart to weep because I am going to meet her."

On the other side, Annie Sheene started on her journey with very different thoughts and sensations.

She, too, felt inclined, and indeed actually did cry at the prospect of so soon meeting Godfrey, but she cried from sheer happiness.

It was only by her mother's mild suggestion that she (Annie) would be pale and ill if she sat up all night that she was persuaded to go to bed at all on Thursday night, and when she did retire she expressed her conviction several times that "It was no use, she knew she should miss the train."

She was up in the morning, however, extremely early, but as it happened not too early, for the time she devoted to her toilet after breakfast was really quite unusual and wonderful. Mrs. Sheene more than once suggested the likelihood of Annie's "taking root" in front of the looking-glass.

Everything went wrong, too, while she was dressing. Pins bent—buttons came off—something would not "meet"—something had to be "let out"—something else had to be tied in a knot, and so on.

And then, even when the cab was at the door (her mother said that the draughts of an omnibus were very dangerous to anyone who was "flustered"), and she was dressed, there remained several little duties to be performed—such as tying a piece of ribbon round the cat's neck, giving her mother numerous solemn warnings about a delectable culinary compound intended for Godfrey's tea, and building in a corner of the room by the aid of Godfrey's walking-stick and old clothes, a sort of Guy Fawkes, which Noodles was to mistake for a man which was to make him jealous and desperate.

At last, her sweet face, and, indeed, her whole sweet self, smothered in the sunniest of smiles, she got into the cab, and after the proper amount of jolting, during which she looked out of the cab windows at the passers by, and thought that inasmuch as they were not going to B— Junction to meet Noodles, they were one and all to be much pitied, arrived at the Paddington Railway Station.

In an extremely business-like manner she booked for B— Junction, and proceeded to the platform. There she compared the time indicated by her little gold watch (which, by the way, she always gave a funny little pat after replacing) with the time indicated by the railway clock, producing, for the purpose her two little perpendicular lines.

It wanted twenty minutes to twelve. The train was announced to start at five minutes to twelve, so she counted the seconds to the time when she would meet Godfrey and multiplied them by the number of letters contained in the name "Noodles," and then subjecting the result to various equally eccentric arithmetical performances, arrived at last at a total that meandered through her brain.

In a shilling magazine displayed on the book-stall there was a wood-cut of a young man alighting from a railway carriage, and a young lady who was clearly his wife, or about to become so, waiting on the platform for him. Annie bought the shilling magazine and turned from the bookstall, still saying to herself the total, which was one thousand three hundred and seventy-two.

"Where for, miss?" said a porter, briskly.

Annie told him.

"This way, miss," he said, seeing that she was a very likely person to give him sixpence. "Train starts very sharp to-day, as there's a fair on down the line, and they runs specials for it."

Annie followed the porter.

"What class, miss?"

"Third," answered Annie.

The porter opened the door of a third-class compartment, which was empty.

Annie would rather be where there were ladies, she said. As she said that she turned her eyes to the next third-class compartment, which was also empty. She smiled. She would go in that carriage. The number on the door of it was "1872."

"I can find you one where there's ladies, miss."

"No," she said. "That one! One thousand three hundred and seventy-two will do!"

And so she took her place with her back to the engine, because it would not do to have a black face when she met Godfrey, then she gave the porter sixpence, and then the train started, as the porter had said, "very sharp," that is to say, it started exactly one minute and a half earlier than its announced time.

And for Annie the train travelled far too slowly.

## CHAPTER XXII.

"YOU SEEM RATHER BADLY YOURSELF, SIR."

B— Junction was a very dingy, weather-beaten station, possessed of three platforms, which were connected with each other by a wooden bridge and staircases. Platform number one was the chief of the three, for the refreshment bar and the book-stall and the station-master's room and the booking-office were there.

Immediately facing the entrance to the station, which led (without the aid of the wooden bridge) direct to platform number one, stood the principal hotel in B—. The hotel was called "Junction Family Hotel."

B— Junction was in a chronic state of dampness. It was unceasingly dripping. When the sun was shining on all other parts of England rain was generally falling on B— and its railway station. When rain was falling heavily over all the country it was sure to be falling more heavily on B—. On the rare occasions when no rain was falling there the railway station used the remains of the last down-pour and dolefully dripped.

Annie, from London, was due at damp B— Junction at 2.56 p.m. Godfrey, from Pondcourt, was due at 3.6 p.m. Annie's place of arrival would be platform number three. Godfrey's would be platform number two; but as her train was to arrive ten minutes earlier than his, there would be plenty of time for her to cross the bridge and be ready on the centre platform to receive him.

When Godfrey's train was about half a mile distant from B— Junction it suddenly came to a standstill. He was not sorry. The merest delay was acceptable. He positively dreaded the coming meeting, her love and his deception, the questioning of her eyes, his acted kiss.

At the end of four minutes the passengers looked out of the carriage windows in the way that they generally look when a stoppage occurs. First at the engine, then at the guard's van, then at the engine again. Godfrey looked out of his carriage window too, but he beheld no cause for alarm of any sort.

Godfrey saw, however, a signal-man walk to the engine and speak a few words to the driver and the stoker rather earnestly.

Presently he was joined by the guard of the train, who entered into the conversation also rather earnestly. One or two of the passengers called out:

"What's the matter, guard?"

At that moment a signal was given that the train could proceed. It immediately started, though at a particularly slow rate. The guard waited till his van came up to him and then jumped into it. As the train passed the guard one or two passengers repeated their question:

"What's the matter?"

The guard did not reply.

The train arrived safely at B— Junction at seventeen minutes past three. Godfrey alighted on platform number two, and looked at once from one end to the other of it, but did not see Annie. He knew that she should arrive on platform number three, and concluded that she had made some mistake about the arrival of his train and was now in one of the waiting-rooms there.

The guard who had not replied to the passengers' question accosted him:

"Are you going on, sir?"

"Yes, but not this moment. I am waiting for a friend. How long do you stop here?"

"Not a minute, sir. We're late already."

Clearly Annie and he must proceed to London

by the next train. He made for the staircase with the intention of seeking her on platform number three, when a somewhat unusual incident arrested his attention for a moment.

Two well-dressed ladies of middle age, a young lady, a little boy and an old gentleman, all of them evidently of one party, and all of them excessively pale and scared, descended in a nervous manner the staircase, followed by two guards, and a porter, who had a tumblerful of brandy in his hand. Following the porter, descended the staircase also two poorly-dressed girls and a young man, likewise pale and scared.

Godfrey, with his foot on the first stair, turned his head and watched them. He could scarcely define his expectations to himself, but his heart commencing to beat, and his tongue to feel dry, he watched them. It was so startling—that general paleness and scared expression.

The guards assisted each of the well-dressed party into a first-class carriage, with very unusual civility.

Some of the brandy was given to the little boy, whose teeth chattered against the glass.

The guards then went to the poorly-dressed party, and with equal civility assisted the two girls into another first-class carriage.

The porter held the glass of brandy to the young man, but he shook his head half foolishly and joined the two girls, his feet almost slipping off the step as he entered the carriage.

It was all done in a few moments. The train slowly left the platform, and the guards looked at each other half gratulatingly, as if they were glad at getting rid of it.

From the first stair Godfrey tried to call out:

"Guard."

He failed. He could not speak. He could not ask a certain question yet.

He ascended the staircase, and when he reached the top he found that he had no recollection of having mounted it. He turned to the right, along the wooden bridge, and then down another staircase on to platform number three.

To his surprise he found it empty (a stationary train had hidden it from him when he was on platform number two). To his great surprise he heard, for the first time, that a most unusual noise of many voices, although no train was on the point of departure or arrival, was going on on platform number one (also hidden from him by stationary carriages).

His limbs seeming to be lifeless, he walked to the only waiting-room on number three. As he turned the handle of the door he said, almost in an inarticulate voice:

"Annie!"

No one answered. The waiting-room was empty. There was a feeble, flickering fire in the grate, which was rapidly expiring.

He caught a glimpse of the reflection of his own face in the looking-glass. It was deadly pale. He walked unsteadily away from the waiting-room up to the staircase and across the bridge.

There seemed to be the Pondcourt fog before him; there seemed to be elasticity in the bridge. He descended the staircase which led to the chief platform, number one. There was no need to ask that question he had dreaded to ask. There were other questions to be asked, but not that first one. The stoppage, the guard who had not replied, the well-dressed and the poorly-dressed parties of persons returning to London, the deserted platform and the many voices were all accounted for in the appearance of platform number one.

There had been an accident.

(To be Continued.)

An underground railway on the compressed-air system, and with thirteen stations, is announced for Naples. At the same time an overground railway is projected for the hilly portion, and communication is to be established between the two lines by means of a lift.

## THE BUNCH OF RUE.

WHEN you enter a court of justice, to this day, in some old country assize town, you see lying before my Lord Judge a bunch of rue. My Lord himself may not know what that bunch of rue means, and the man who cuts it and lays it out will give you, if you ask him, the strangest version of the ceremony. Some will rue the day when my Lord Judge comes down to try. That is true, many will rue the day; but the meaning is not there. The bunch of rue was once, not very long ago, the supposed antiseptic or purifier which interposed between my Lord Judge's nose and the fever-stricken prisoners at the bar before him.

Once, not very long ago, the jails from whence those prisoners were brought were the centres of the great pestilent disease, typhus. The men, stived up in these horrid dens, fed with air charged with their own emanations, and fed with food on which they starved, generated the contagion of disease. They were the cobras of society, secreting a poison worse than the cobra's, a poison volatile, subtle, deadly, that would diffuse into the air and not spare my Lord himself if he came within the sphere of its influence. The jails then were the foci of fever. But a change took place. Howard, who was as good a sanitarian as he was a philanthropist, and whose rules for the construction of sick hospitals remain model rules to this hour, proclaimed his mission. The jails began to improve; one improvement of a sanitary kind followed upon another improvement; the results began to arrest attention, and the good that was being done increased and increased with every year. And now what think you of the triumph? The triumphant result is that in the jails, the foci once of disease of the spreading kind and of worst types, spreading diseases cannot practically exist at all. We might lay roses before my Lord to-day, instead of rue, or lay the rue on the dock instead of the bench, for the prisoner, in matter of risk from contagion, is actually safer than his judge.

We cannot overstate this lesson. If the homes of those who live in the seed-time of health; if the nursery, the schoolroom, the school dormitory, the play-ground, were only kept in the same state of physical purity as the model prison, the perils from the accidental diseases caused by infectious particles of disease were soon removed, and the immortelles we see on the little graves so thickly laid in cemetery and churchyard were as little called for as the rue on my Lord's dais.

To many people the art of conversation is an "unknown land." It is a mystery to them how it is begun and how maintained. But it is not impossible to master the art of entertaining.

## HOW TO CARRY ON CONVERSATION.

The first thing to do is to select a subject, for without anything to talk about a talk would be but babble, and as we are obliged to talk with everybody, and it is such an agreeable thing to be able to converse, no coterie should be without the ability. Indeed one need not search for something to say. He has only to reflect what the man or child he meets knows most about.

"What," he asks himself, "does this young woman like best to meditate upon and to study? What is the intellectual pursuit of this young man, or what sport does he like?"

These questions answered it is only necessary to express some unfeigned interest in what the other loves, to draw him at once into animated conversation.

"You are a musician, I believe?" may be said. "What kind of music do you like best to sing or play?" And "Do you like Beethoven or Mozart best?"

"I understand you are writing for the papers. I think it is a good pursuit, but I know so little about it that I wish you would tell me something."

Or the person may be a lover of science, when a question upon some topic which you are sure he is well informed upon brings his talent to the surface and sets going an interesting and profitable talk.

Sometimes indeed a dispute may start an opinion. A suggestion here and there will set the ball in motion again, should the subject lag. Boswell's Johnson is one of the best examples of conversation on record. "Bozzy" knew perfectly well how to drop a line into the deep well of the ponderous doctor's treasury and set his "bear" to entertaining a whole room full of company.

It is a maxim well understood but seldom expressed in words that if you want to find out anything you must ask somebody who knows. It is equally true that no one is more ready to talk upon a given subject than one who has made the subject his study. The fact that he possesses sufficient enthusiasm for a pursuit to follow it earnestly is proof that he is ready to tell about it. He can tell with more interest than anyone can feel who listens to him all that a questioner desires to know, and it must be remembered that it is the first and most desirable aim of a conversation mutually to impart and to gain knowledge and information.

Almost everyone who studies any subject feels that the treatise he reads lack a few particulars that he would give a long day of study to gain. Should he retain these matters in his mind, and ask the next man he meets who is well informed of his own observation upon this wanting particular he can gain what he requires at the shortest possible pains.

It is true that the rules of etiquette forbid that a man in the parlours of a host of an evening should be questioned upon matters concerning his everyday business, and this law, inexorable by reason of its fitness, should seldom, except for good reason, be broken. A naturalist, however, and an artist, a musician and a literary man are shut out from the refuge that a tradesman can find in avoiding tiresome reference to the pursuits of commerce and the affairs of business.

While a physician, by the immutable laws of his profession, is forbidden to disclose the secrets of his patients, and a lawyer is in the same way restricted, yet either may be drawn upon for general illustrations of human phenomena without leading upon forbidden paths.

No one is a more genial talker than a professional man. His long and cordial association with the brotherhood of his clique has in the off-hours drawn forth many a spicy illustration of the curiosities and the quaint sayings of his own kind. His acquaintance with all shades of life and society furnishes him many an illustration of the dark as well as the bright side of human nature. So he is the first objective power in a battery of words and is seldom proof against the most awkward sallies.

There is nothing so well adapted to supplement one's own knowledge of an art or science as a suggestion from an enthusiastic proficient in the same. So soon as someone discovers that you know never so little on a subject, and that you desire to know more, he is ready, provided he does not betray secrets or prejudice his own cause, to tell all you wish to learn if you modestly say what you think.

We should be sorry if it should turn out that anything recommended in the course of this article should be so construed as meaning that the poor physician, or best friend in a strait, should be bored with impertinent questions and forced like the busy bee to render unwillingly all the good stores he has with so much labour accumulated.

All classes of men and women know something. It is a proof of our skill when we draw forth from a sandy soil some rich production of nature; so it is a pleasure both to us and to another to gather from an unpromising soil some precious things which are all the more desirable from their difficulty to be attained, like the magic water of youth in the fable, procured from the dragon's cave by the prowess of some valiant knight.





["SET HIM FREE!" ECHOED THE COUNT; AND EUPHROSIA'S EYES OPENED WIDE WITH SURPRISE.]

## POWER AND POVERTY.

A NEW NOVEL.

(BY OWEN LANDOR.)

### CHAPTER XXVII.

#### IN TROUBLE.

"Till death us twain shall part." Oh, wife of my poor heart, There is no death, no parting from which my soul would start Save this dark one of shame.

THERE is something very ludicrous in the knocking of the heads of two persons together, except to the persons who are principally concerned, and a concussion, whether accidental or intentional, rarely fails to raise a laugh. But there was no merriment in the kitchen of the count's house when the craniums of Murch and Reuben Stark were brought into contact with each other.

It was a grim affair all round. Mrs. Barnes was terribly in earnest; the under-keeper had no sense of humour, and it is not to be expected that either of the sufferers, even if they had not been knocked out of time, could have seen the humour of it.

"And who may you be?" asked Mrs. Barnes, as she held them at arm's length; "not regular burglars, I can see, but up to no good, I'll swear."

Reuben opened his mouth and Murch opened his; they also blinked their eyes, but beyond these feeble demonstrations nothing came from them. The vigorous Mrs. Barnes pushed them both into a corner and bade them remain there in peril of their lives.

"And you, Mr. Booby," she said, turning to the keeper, "why don't you go and call Barnes, or the count, or Mounseer Pierre, instead of staring like a stuck pig?"

The man's name was not Booby, but he was accustomed to a variety of names from her lips, and betook himself off with all speed. Not thinking of looking for Barnes outside he did not find him, but he found the count and brought him to the kitchen.

The two intruders being gifted with a good bony covering for their brains had suffered no material damage from the treatment they had received, and had returned to a tolerably clear knowledge of things around them, and among other things they realised that it would be prudent not to attempt conclusions with Mrs. Barnes, who was keeping guard over them with a very ugly carving-knife.

"Hey day! what is this?" said the count, blowing off a cloud of smoke from a cigar. "Strangers at The Hollows, and calling at the house so late! Why, let me see, this is Murch. What has brought you here, my friend?"

He spoke with assumed nonchalance, but he was very much taken aback to find the old man there. Even Murch, still a little confused, could see as much.

"Yes, count, it's me, and I daresay you know what I've come for."

"To see an old friend, of course," said the count, with a laugh.

"No, count, I've come for my daughter!" returned Murch.

"So you think that I have your daughter?" said the count, coolly.

"I fancy so."

"It is strange, but you are a man of visions. Your gifted mind creates strange things. And what should I do with your daughter here?"

"That's best known to you," said Murch; "same as the reason why you tried that messin'-merism"—what a word Murch made of it!—"on her; likewise when you gave her pison."

"I gave your daughter pison!" exclaimed the count, his face suddenly blanching.

It was a piece of guesswork on the part of Murch, but he found that he had hit home. Following up the attack he administered another heavy blow.

"Pison! of course it was; and haven't we got some of it in a bottle in the hands of a gentleman, as told what it was, and as soon as we find that she is really dead— But she isn't!" he cried, suddenly turning an imploring face upon the count; "tell me that; say that you have her; set her free, and everything shall be forgiven."

"I know nothing about your daughter," was the cold reply. "You rave. I am here to study science. Who is your friend?"

"My name's Stark," said Reuben, curtly, "and I'm hodd man to Sir Newton Thurle."

"You are a pair of idle rascals," said the count, suddenly, drawing a revolver from his breast; "and now what is to prevent me shooting the pair of you?"

"Nothing," said Reuben, coolly, "only if I'm not back at Deerland—that's Sir Newton's place—by daylight you'll have fifty people down here in search of me, and they'll take no denial."

"You left word where you were going to?" hissed the count.

"That's it, sir," replied Reuben.

"It was a goodly precaution, and it has saved your lives. They might say hard things of me if I were to kill you, but no more, for you have come here like thieves and I could treat you as such. But I don't want hard things said of me. I wish to live at peace with my neighbours. Get out of this place at once!"

Mrs. Barnes stared, the under-keeper gasped, and Reuben and Murch, with some thought of treachery in their minds, stared in amazement. But the count was serious and for once honest.

"I really mean it," he said. "Go! I have really nothing to conceal here, and you are at liberty to chatter about all you have seen. You found your way in, find your way out—only be quick, as it is late, and we are people of the decent living and wish to go to rest."

"Come along," said Reuben, hurriedly; "let's get out of this."

And without let or hindrance they departed from the kitchen.

As soon as the sound of their footsteps died

away the count dashed his cigar into the grate and turned on Mrs. Barnes.

"Where is your husband?" he snarled.

"He went to look at the locks and bolts, count," replied the woman, trembling, in spite of her huge frame and giant strength.

"Looking to the bolts and bars! Bah! and could he not keep those two sneaking villains out?"

"It is a mystery to me, count, how they got in."

"That we will find out as soon as Barnes comes back. Go and find him."

But Mrs. Barnes could not find her husband quite so readily as she hoped, owing to another trifling mishap that had befallen him.

Just prior to the reappearance of Murch and Reuben in the open air he had recovered partial consciousness, and with a dim sense of the moonlight being daylight, and he had some duty to perform in the grounds. He was staggering up the Ghaut when the two friends espied him.

"Barnes!" said Reuben.

"That's he!" said Murch.

"I don't think another would hurt him," murmured Reuben, softly.

"Another what?"

"Whack on the head."

"Well! I think he might have it."

Murch said this with the air of a doctor who quite agrees with another doctor about the course to be adopted with a patient, and accordingly Reuben stopped forward on tiptoe and without the least hesitation once more laid the unfortunate Barnes in the dust.

"I'm afeared you have done for him now," said Murch, looking at the prostrate form rather dismally.

"Don't be afraid," Reuben replied, "there's another end in store for him. Come along."

They jogged on together until they were clear of the surrounding land and standing upon the high road at a point where they proposed to part.

"Not done much to-night," said Murch.

"Do more next time," replied Reuben.

"That was a good thought, leaving word where you were gone. Tothorwise the count would have settled us," said Murch.

"So you were taken in with the rest," chuckled Reuben. "I never told anybody what I was gone; never thought of such a thing until it came into my head to barney the count."

Murch gazed at his friend with unbounded admiration, then shook him affectionately by both hands.

"You're a genius, you are—a reglar genius."

And so they parted, Reuben hurrying off to get a little sleep in a loft before his daily duties began, and Murch returning thoughtfully to the inn, disappointed as to the failure of his object, but inclined on the whole to be thankful for having come out of the night adventure with his life.

But his joy was short-lived. Ere many hours were over he and Reuben were arrested for attempted burglary and murder and taken to the nearest magistrate, where the count and his satellites appeared against them.

They had only to tell the truth as far as the invasion of the house and the blows given to Barnes and the case was clear enough. What had the culprits to say for themselves?

Reuben had no real defence, and Murch, never a great speaker, told a rambling story without head or tail to it, and even Sir Newton Thurlie, who came to the sitting to see if he could help his old servant, was obliged to admit that it was a very bad case, and the two culprits were formally committed for trial.

"It don't matter to me much," thought Murch, as they shut him in a cell, "but what will Molly say? Poor Molly."

human nature very well, and was pretty sure that Murch would make a poor hand at defending himself, and that if he did succeed in making his story clear it would not be credited. He was in his liveliest mood as he returned to The Hollows accompanied by Barnes.

The head of the latter was most copiously bandaged, for he had made the most of his injuries. Had his head as many cracks as an ancient china saucer the liberal amount of linen tied round it would have held it together. The effect on the whole was very horrible, and the sight of him was enough to make the least impressionable of spectators dream of bloody wars for a month.

While they were in the highways and in paths where they were likely to meet with people the count walked on alone, and Barnes followed with becoming humility in the rear, but in striving into a wood through which they could get to The Hollows by a short cut the count fell back a little so that they walked on side by side.

"See what I do for you, my good Barnes," he said, "I risk so much for your poor, cracked head."

"If they had hammered yours," replied Barnes, sulkily, "I think you would have risked a little more."

"I would, as you know, risk anything for revenge," replied the count. "For instance, if I trust a man and he betrays me I will punish him sooner or later."

"Which I may take as a hint to me."

"As you like, my good Barnes, and please don't show any temper to me, I am too good natured to endure it. You understand."

Barnes, still a little sulky, but subdued, touched his cap and said that "He warn't of the selling sort, but when a man got his head hammered like a horse-shoe it was natural for him to take it rough."

"It is not natural to me," said the count, smoothly, "and therefore I will not endure it."

Barnes made no reply but fell back a pace and scowled. The look he gave the count, materially assisted in significance by the bandage, was a very ugly one.

It was just three when they reached The Hollows, where an unexpected visitor was awaiting the return of the count in the person of Lord Mowerby. He was walking up and down in front of the house with Euphrosia, watched by Pierre, who scowled and sneered at a distance.

"Ah! my good lord," said the count, extending his hands, "welcome! welcome!"

"How do you do?" replied Lord Mowerby, somewhat stiffly. "You did not expect me."

"No! of a surety."

"I came in a hurry, for there was no time to lose."

"Anything wrong with the society?"

"No, but with our own little affairs. About a year ago you were good enough to take charge of a man whom I disliked."

"Ah! yes; I mesmerised him and I drugged him and I got him away."

"Nearly muddling the whole business," said Lord Mowerby, "for from what I hear he got away from you and twice went that night to his father's warehouse."

"Ah! yes," replied the count, "he went, I daresay, but the mind was uncertain, and he did nothing but stare in like the owl."

"Well! you got him again."

"I found him just in time and took him to my house, when we took off his clothes and put them on to the body of a member of the society who had broken our laws and paid the penalty. Ah! you remember."

"Yes, it was poor Mitchell! not unlike Cranbury in general appearance."

"No," said the count, "and at night Pierre and I carried him in a society cab and pitched him into the river."

"As you have served others."

"The society commands and I obey. But to your business, my good lord."

"Ay! to my business. You took charge of Cranbury—"

"To oblige you."

"To have a hold upon me, thinking to reap a large profit when I came into the estates, but I have thwarted you by making acquaintance with the chief—"

"Well, well," said the count, "we will not bandy words. I took this Cranbury and kept him for you."

"And now," said Lord Mowerby, "you may set him free again."

"Set him free," echoed the count, and Euphrosia's handsome eyes opened wide with surprise.

"Yes," replied Lord Mowerby. "I can gain nothing by his being kept a prisoner. I have received my congé from Janet Rose. She will not have anything to do with me otherwise than as a friend."

"She is not of soft material," said the count, thoughtfully, "but to set this young Cranbury free! Ah! how shall I do that?"

"That I leave to you," coolly replied Lord Mowerby, "just as I left his removal from my path. It is all left to your discretion."

"You speak lightly, for you are not compromised," said the count, looking straight ahead, "but if I set him free—Ah! it will bring trouble."

"You must get out of the country."

"Alas! it does not suit me to leave this country—just yet."

"What the deuce can detain you here?"

"My friend, I have secrets, even from you; not society secrets, of course," he hastened to add, "but matters of money. I add to my income here."

"That is a matter I have nothing to do with," said Lord Mowerby, firmly. "Cranbury must not be kept any longer."

"This is sudden," said Euphrosia.

"I do not wish to be imperative about a day or two," replied Lord Mowerby, "but within a week he must be released. I deeply regret the part I have played."

"There was a time," returned Euphrosia, "when you were not imperative and when regret was a word we never heard from your lips. Have you ever regretted anything but this affair with young Cranbury?"

"I regret many things," he answered, "my whole life, in short. It would have been better for me if I had never been born."

"Growing soft," sneered the count.

"No, only awaking."

"It is not Cranbury who alone must be set free," said the count, after they had paced up and down a while in silence, "don't forget the girl—this Peggy. She is sharp in the eye as the eagle. She knows very much."

"But she must not be harmed," said Lord Mowerby, angrily, "there must be no taking of life."

"You must be surely mad! This Peggy is as good as a nest of hornets about our ears."

"Yours, not mine."

"Ah! I forgot," said the count, with a tinge of bitterness, "you have made a passy of me. It was I who had to rake out the chestnuts and be burnt. It is enough, I must bear my lot. You will honour us by staying in The Hollows for a while?"

"For a day or two, thanks; but it will not be wise of me to compromise myself," replied Lord Mowerby, coolly.

The count's face did not show much of the anger within him, but there was a slight paling of the cheeks and dilatation of nostrils that those who knew him thoroughly would have recognised as ominous signs. Lord Mowerby did not observe these indications or was indifferent to them.

Pierre now joined the party with the dogged air of one who feels he has been shut out of agreeable society quite long enough and means to be shut out no longer. He addressed himself to Euphrosia, who was curt with him, and probably with the object of punishing him for his persistence she was very amiable to Lord Mowerby, more so than his late declaration justified.

He responded courteously, but he did no more. The jealous Pierre, however, saw in every

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### HOW WILL IT END?

The broad seas darken slowly in the west,  
The whirling sea birds call from nest to nest.  
Draw near and touch me leaning out of space.

It was a bold move on the part of the count, but, as we have seen, it was successful. He knew



look and word a return of a passion that had long been dead in both, and dark and terrible thoughts took possession of him.

The count watched him and smiled. He too had dark thoughts, and here was the man to carry out his wishes without hesitation. So he let the game go on until Pierre was on the verge of explosion and then he drew Euphrosia away.

"Come," he said, "I want to have a little talk with you, my sister, before you dress for dinner, so we will leave Lord Mowbray and Pierre to have a cigar together."

The count was in one of his lightest moods and sang softly as he and Euphrosia sauntered away, but as soon as he had reached his own room his mood changed.

"Euphrosia," he said, "sit down. It is your advice I want."

"You always come to me when you are in trouble," she coldly replied.

"I trust to your woman's wit in an emergency. Why should I trouble you with petty things?"

"All that is very pretty. You want advice. Well?"

"What is to be done?"

"If this pretty boy, Cranbury, is set free, what will follow?"

"Not much, perhaps, if Mowbray will let us alone. But I see through it all. He wishes to involve me in ruin and stand by and laugh at us."

"Then kill Mowbray," said Euphrosia, indifferently, "you have him with you. It is a good opportunity."

"You forget the society," said the count, "the brotherhood that never forgives and is so secret and sure in its working. He has the chief's pass."

"Forged perhaps," she answered, "and if not what then? Kill him and cut the society. I am weary of it. Let us fly from it. There are disguises to be had."

"For three of us?"

"No, for two. If you kill Mowbray you must kill Pierre too. Both have been your tools and one is already your master. The other will also be your master by-and-by."

"You are a bold woman," said the count, gazing at her with admiration.

"I am bold because I am a woman," she replied. "True courage is seldom found in a man. If you want resolute purpose, unswerving determination, and a will that is neither to be bent nor turned aside, do you not seek it in us? Does I bid you. Kill this Mowbray. Kill him! It is not difficult now that he is here. If you would shrink the task, leave him to me. Pierre I must ask you to dispose of. He is too poor game for me."

"Again, I say, Euphrosia, that you are a bold woman, a wonderful woman. It shall be as you wish. I too am tired of this life. It is worse than death, and in flying from it we can but find death—the Great Sleep from which there is no awaking."

"So you say," replied Euphrosia, doubtfully, "and I have thought so, under your tuition, but I have a growing belief in a future."

"Come, Euphrosia," said the count, "you must not turn faint-hearted."

"I will do my share of the struggle to be free," she said. "Do yours as well and we shall laugh at all our foes."

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### WITH THE PRISONERS.

There is no sorrow hidden or confessed,  
There is no passion uttered or suppressed  
Thou canst not for a little while efface,  
Enfold me in thy mystical embrace,  
Oh, happy sleep.

PEGGY and Jack Cranbury could now pass to and fro into each other's room, and together they inspected their prison in search of some means of escape.

Their first thoughts turned to the windows, but the iron bars were fixed by a practised hand, and without a file to cut them through

nothing could be done there. They had nothing but the little strips of iron which Peggy had used to cut through the semi-rotten partition.

"And what use are they, Peggy?" said Jack, ruefully.

"Keep up a good heart, Master Jack," replied Peggy, "we shall find some way of getting out. How about the chimneys?"

"Too narrow, Peggy. They have been partly bricked up at the top and a child could not get through the opening."

"Well, then, the floor, Master Jack. There may be cellars underneath the flags, you know. We must have one up."

"What a woman you are, Peggy," said Jack—"a woman of a thousand. I really think that if ever we get away I should make a mistake by not marrying you."

"And what's to become of Ben Tomkins, sir?" asked Peggy.

"Who's he?"

"My young man; and if I married anybody else he would go stark raving mad and come and kill me. He has told me so a hundred times, and I know he will keep his word."

"In that case," said Jack, gravely, "I had better stick to my old love."

"As you have done so all through, Master Jack."

"And as I hope she has to me."

"Don't be afraid, sir—Miss Janet is steel. I know her, or I should not have remained in her service. It wouldn't have suited me to serve any of your shallow young ladies who go hopping here and there in search of a husband and end by hopping altogether outside the matrimonial ring."

"On my word, Peggy, you are quite brilliant, and at The Knoll you seldom said anything but 'Yes, sir, or 'No, sir,' as the case might be."

"Being at The Knoll is one thing and being here is another. Now, Master Jack, we must not waste our time chattering, but let us pick out a flagstone and begin to clear out the cement."

Both were in high spirits, and were very much like what they used to be. Jack was not quite so light hearted and buoyant as he had been prior to his confinement, but hope was strong in his heart, and the pleasure of having near him somebody he knew had raised his spirits from something below zero to eighty in the shade, and Peggy was happy in the conviction that they would end in getting free.

They began working just as twilight was setting in, an hour when they were never disturbed, and having selected a flagstone immediately behind the door, where their labours would be little likely to attract attention, they knelt down side by side and scraped away vigorously until darkness set in.

"Mrs. Barnes will be round directly, Master Jack," said Peggy, rising; "she generally pays me a visit some time after dark, so I'll just go and make believe that I'm fast asleep."

This Peggy did, but that night Mrs. Barnes neglected her usual duty, and did not appear until very late. It was the night when Murch and Reuben essayed to examine the count's house with the disastrous result already recorded, and it was nearly two o'clock when her burly frame appeared at the door.

"Are you there, minx?" she bawled out.

"Here, Mrs. Barnes," replied Peggy, meekly.

"That's right. Shall I tell you a bit of news?" asked the woman, with a coarse laugh.

"You will be glad to hear it."

"You may if you like, Mrs. Barnes," said Peggy, more meekly than before, "and I do hope it's good."

"Depends upon how you take it. Your father's been to see you."

Peggy wanted all her presence of mind to keep her from springing up in the bed and so revealing that she was fully dressed, which would indubitably have excited Mrs. Barnes's suspicions and probably ended in a discovery of the passage which had been made through the partition.

"My father?" she echoed, trembling.

"Yes. He came without being invited," said Mrs. Barnes, "but we made him easy

about you not being here and he's gone away again. Good night."

She closed the door, chuckled, and poor Peggy lay for awhile in a state of blank despair. She had no thought of having been the victim of a jest, the tone of the woman was all convincing, and for a time it seemed as if her reason would give way under this new trial. Her father to have been there and bamboozled into a belief that he had come upon a vain search was heart-breaking.

Fortunately tears came to her relief, and she had a good hearty cry, which did her a world of good and brought her to herself.

"My father been here," she thought. "Then he does not think me dead as I feared he would. But how did he find me out?"

It was a puzzle, but she was not a woman to waste her time in vain speculations, and creeping back to Jack Cranbury she told him in a whisper all that had passed.

"So you see," she said, "we are not given up. Let us work and meet them half way."

They had no light, but all the night through they scraped at the hard cement between the flagstones, and when the morning light crept in between the bars they brushed away the dust they had made and Peggy crept back to her couch, when she slept soundly until aroused by Mrs. Barnes.

That amiable personage was again in a bantering humour, and expressed a hope that Peggy had got over the disappointment she must have felt at not seeing "her dear papa." Peggy quietly declared that she had quite got over it. Whereat Mrs. Barnes exhibited a tendency to frown.

"Don't tell me that, you pale-faced minx!" she said, "for I know better. And you are the woman that Barnes had the impudence to tell me was pretty—right to my face too. But he won't do THAT again."

Being unable to see what the admiration of Barnes had to do with the coming of her father Peggy prudently remained silent.

"I never CAN make out what men see in straws of women like you," pursued Mrs. Barnes. "They all talk as if marriage is dear at any price, and in you there's precious little for their money."

"I don't think I ever talked of marrying, ma'am," said Peggy, "and I don't know which of the two men is Mr. Barnes."

"Not know him," hissed Mrs. Barnes, letting loose the pent-up jealousy of many days. "Oh, the bare-faced lying of you minxes! But my turn will come. I've a promise of having you in my own keeping to do as I like with. Ha! ha! then I'll square accounts with you—you—straw of a woman!"

"I don't know what has put you into this rage," said Peggy, calmly. "But let me tell you that it doesn't matter to me which of the men is your husband. I wouldn't have either of them if there wasn't another man on earth—I would as soon marry a gorilla."

"Do you mean to say that my husband is a gorilla?" asked Mrs. Barnes, a little taken aback by Peggy's unexpected exhibition of pluck.

"No, he is not one," replied Peggy, undaunted, "the gorillas wouldn't own him. Now, ma'am, you have your answer."

For a moment it seemed as if Mrs. Barnes there and then meant to avenge the insult offered to her spouse by flying at Peggy and tearing her into shreds, but she controlled herself and smiled a ghastly smile.

"Very good, my lady," she said, "I'll remember that—by-and-bye;" and fearing she would lose all control over herself she hastened out and banged the door after her.

"If any of them think they can frighten me," said Peggy, with a spirited look round the room, "they will find themselves mistaken."

But she felt that when she was once under the unrestricted control of the gigantic virago that her lot would be very hard. The prospect only stimulated her in her labours to escape.

Neither she nor Jack dare work during the day, but as soon as the evening came on they began again and laboured until it was dusk.

Peggy then proposed to retire again, but Jack urged her to stay a little longer.

"Every minute is of importance," he said, "and that woman, as you will remember, was very late last night."

"But she may come earlier to-night."

"Not she. Come, let us have another half-hour of it—the stone is getting loose."

Peggy knelt down again, felt her way to the crevice, and was about to begin again when she felt Jack's hand grasp her arm.

"Be quiet," he whispered, "for Heaven's sake."

"Do you hear anything?" asked Peggy, with a chilly feeling about the heart.

"Yes, they are at the door. Keep still. There is nothing now but for us to fight for it!"

And as he spoke the lock was softly turned back and the door of the room gently opened; but whoever was there had brought no light, and in moving was as silent as a ghost.

(To be Continued.)

## A BRAVE WOMAN.

A SHORT STORY.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

In spite of the high opinion which we entertain of feminine courage in general we must be permitted to doubt whether you all, ladies, feel yourselves capable of imitating on a similar occasion the heroine of the following little story, which we can recommend to your attention as entirely true.

Madame Aubrey occupied with her husband a large old house in the village of D—. This house stood entirely alone at the foot of an immense garden, far from neighbours, and had no other occupant than Monsieur and Madame Aubrey, their son, an infant of twelve months, and a domestic, recently admitted into their service.

One evening, in the month of November, Madame Aubrey was awaiting with some anxiety the return of her husband, who had been gone since morning to a town distant a few miles from D—. His business was to collect a debt, and he expected to bring home a large sum of money, and his wife now remembered, with a feeling of uneasiness, that she had seen him arm himself with a pair of pistols.

It was about six o'clock, and Madame Aubrey went to her chamber accompanied by the domestic with the intention of putting her little boy to bed. This apartment, large and high, was situated on the second floor, looking into the garden.

The oaken wood-work, turned almost black with age, the old-fashioned furniture of grotesque form and gloomy colour, and some family portraits in ancient dress and severe countenances, gave to the room somewhat of a forbidding aspect.

A deep alcove, beside which was placed the cradle of the infant, occupied nearly all the side of the room opposite to the fireplace. The curtains were drawn across the front, but one corner having caught upon some article near was raised sufficiently to show the foot of the bedstead, made of the same dark wood with the rest of the furniture, and carved in the curious figures and grotesque lines in which the artisans of a hundred years back were wont to indulge.

The night was a true November night—black and gloomy, with torrents of rain, which beat continually upon the windows. The trees of the garden, bent by the force of the wind, from time to time drew the finger-like ends of their branches across the glass, making a fantastic and melancholy concert, in which mingled no human voice—no sound which promised human aid, should the want be ever so urgent.

Madame Aubrey sat upon a low chair in the corner of the fireplace, holding upon her knees the little boy, whom she was undressing, while

the servant at the other end of the room executed certain orders of her mistress.

A blazing wood fire, aided by a lamp upon the mantelshelf, threw a strong light upon some objects, left others in intense shadow, and upon others again cast a wayward and fitful gleam, which caused them to assume grotesque and unreal forms.

The baby had ceased his laughing play and had closed his drowsy eyes. The mother threw her eyes toward the cradle to assure herself that all was prepared; at this moment the fire blazed up suddenly and threw a strong light upon the corner of the bed exposed by the lifted curtain.

As Madame Aubrey looked she almost fell from her chair; under the bed, close to the cradle in which she had been about to deposit her sleeping child, she now beheld two great feet, shod in coarse brogans. In an instant the sense of her situation flashed across the mind of the young woman as if shown by a flash of lightning.

This hidden man no doubt was a thief, perhaps an assassin. She was alone, without help present or soon to be expected, for her husband was not to return until eight or nine o'clock, and it was now but little past six. What should she do? How should she defend herself?

Madame Aubrey had uttered no cry—she had not even moved, but she feared that the servant making the same discovery might not show the same prudence. The thief probably intended to remain in his present position until the middle of the night, then to issue forth and possess himself of the sum brought home by Monsieur Aubrey.

But if prematurely discovered, and having no opponents but two women, he would probably make his escape, first securing their silence by their death. Then who knows but the servant herself was an accomplice?—suspicious circumstances, hitherto disregarded, returned with renewed violence to the mind of Madame Aubrey.

All these thoughts passed through the mind of the young mother in less time than we have occupied in the telling. Before many minutes had elapsed her calmness had entirely returned, and she had decided upon her part in the terrible drama. But she must get rid of the servant.

"You know," she said, without the least faltering of her voice, "you know the dishes which my husband prefers, and I think he will be well pleased to find a good supper ready against his return. I had forgotten to tell you about it before, but go now and begin your preparations and bestow attention upon it."

"But," answered the servant, "shall you not want me here, as usual?"

"No, I can do everything myself. Monsieur would be displeased, I am sure, if after his long ride in such weather he should not find a good supper upon his return."

After some attempts at delay, which redoubled in Madame Aubrey an uneasiness which she was obliged to conceal, the girl quitted the chamber. Her footsteps died away on the stairs, and her mistress found herself alone with her child and those two terrible feet, which, half seen in the now dying light, seemed immovable as the bedstead itself.

She still remained sitting near the chimney with the baby upon her lap, addressing to him, almost mechanically, caressing words, and soothing him to sleep, while her eyes never wandered from the menacing feet. The little fellow, tired of his position, began to cry for his cradle and its soothing motion, but the cradle was close to the alcove—close to the feet. The young mother conquered herself by a violent effort.

"Come then, my child," said she; and rising from her chair, she forced her tottering steps to be firm, and went toward the alcove. Behold her close to the ominous feet! She placed the baby in the cradle, and with a voice which all her resolution could hardly keep from trembling, she commenced to sing her usual lullaby to the unconscious child, and as she sang the idea was ever in her mind that each word might be her last. At last the boy slept soundly, and the mother returned to her seat by the fire.

The clock strikes seven. One hour more and

Madame Aubrey may expect deliverance. A deep silence reigned in the chamber. The infant slept peacefully. His mother, her hands convulsively clasping each other, her lips apart, her eyes fixed upon the menacing feet, remained immovable as a statue.

From time to time some noise in the garden would cause the heart of the watcher to leap with hope, but it always proved to be the rain, the wind, or the shaken trees. It seemed to the unhappy woman that time had stopped, and that she was alone in the world with those haunting feet.

Heavens! They move! Is the assassin about to commence his fearful work? But no—it was only a slight movement, induced, no doubt, by the constrained position. He resumes his immobility.

The half-hour strikes. The anxious watcher could have almost sworn that it was two hours since it struck last; but, no, she knows that the clock is faithful, and there is still another weary half-hour before she may expect her deliverer.

Madame Aubrey took a book of religious meditations from the chimney-piece above her head and attempted to read. Vain effort! Her eyes wandered continually from the page. Suddenly a thought crossed her mind with the sharpness and suddenness of light—if her husband should not return!

His parents lived in the village to which he had gone; what more natural than that, seeing the severity of the weather, M. Aubrey should allow himself, by fond persuasions, to be detained until morning!

She could neither wonder at nor blame him. But then what would become of herself and the little one dearer than herself? Her brain reeled under the thought.

Eight o'clock sounded, and nobody had come. The supposition then was correct—the unhappy woman gave herself up for lost. She was about to seize her child and fly from the room, when a noise resounded from the gravel walk beneath the window.

The eager listener dared not trust her ears, she had been so often deceived—but now the door rolled upon its hinges and then fell heavily back in its place. A well-known step gaily ascended the stairs—the chamber door opened and a man appeared—a man, handsome, strong, and vigorous. It was he! At this moment, had M. Aubrey been the ugliest of men—the worst of husbands—he would have assumed, in the eyes of his wife, all the graces, all the virtues imaginable.

He had only paused below to take off his dripping cloak and lay down his pistols. He extended his arms, and his wife rushed into them. But immediately recovering herself, she placed one finger on her lips, and with the other hand pointed to the feet.

M. Aubrey would not have been worthy of such a wife if he had failed in decision or sang froid. He gave a glance at his wife which said that he understood, and said, aloud:

"One moment, my darling, and I will return. I have left my pocket-book downstairs, and I must show you my riches."

With these words he left the room, but in a moment he returned, holding a pistol in his hand. He examined the lock, approached the bed, stooped down, and with his left hand seized one of the two feet, the finger of his right hand resting on the trigger of his pistol.

"Resist and you are a dead man!" he exclaimed.

The owner of the feet did not seem disposed to risk the event. He suffered himself to be dragged by the foot into the middle of the room, where he disclosed a most villainous face as he crouched before the pistol pointed at his head. On being searched a dagger was found and newly sharpened. He confessed that the servant was his accomplice, and had told him of the booty which awaited him.

Nothing remained but to deliver both to justice. Madame Aubrey indeed begged her husband to let them escape, but the public interest demanded the sacrifice of private lenity, and they were delivered up. During all this



time the unconscious child slept soundly. After some little time Madame Aubrey related the events of the evening.

"I did not think you had been so brave," said her husband, embracing her.

But in spite of her bravery, the events of that night brought on a nervous fever, from which our little heroine did not recover for some weeks.

## FACETIÆ.

THROW the boomerang away ever so far and it returns. Mr. Bradlaugh is the political boomerang. Punch.

"LIVE AND LEARN."

MAGISTRATE: "Do you know the nature of an oath, my boy?"

WITNESS (promptly): "Yess, sir. 'Must take it, sir—'relse I can't be 'Memb'r o' Parl'ment, sir!" Punch.

THE POLITICAL FASHION IN FRANCE.—Pink Republicanism. Punch.

"LAPSUS LINGUE."

PATER: "Now, look here, my boy, I can't have these late hours! When I was your age my father wouldn't let me stay out after dark."

FILIUS: "Humph! 'Nice sort o' father you must have had, I should say."

PATER (waxing): "'Deuced sight better than you have, you young—"

[Checks himself, and exit!] Punch.

MRS. RAMSBOTHAM infinitely prefers "Closure" to "Clôture." In the latter case, she says, one is so apt to omit the circumspect aspect over the "o." Punch.

SIR E. WATKIN is going for a Channel Tunnel, not for a sea-side pier-age. If his under-the-sea scheme comes to the ground, how will the title of Barren Channel Tunnel suit him? He's perfectly welcome to it. Punch.

TOMMY TO THE POOR.

TOMMY: "Please, mamma, may I have some more pudding?"

MAMMA: "No, Tommy; I think you have had quite sufficient. You know if you want to be healthy and strong you should never eat as much as you can, but you should stop when you can eat a bit more."

TOMMY: "Yes, ma, I know that, and I want to see if I can eat a bit more now." Judy.

RUSSIAN LEATHER.—The knout.

Moonshine.

A REPORTER, describing the Bradlaugh-produced riots at Northampton, and the efforts to restore tranquillity, "says that 'no stone has been left unturned.' This indeed is an awful state of things. Moonshine.

IRON-Y.

WHAT part of an omnibus should you imagine would give out first?—The wheels, because they are always tire-d before they start in the morning. Judy.

THE TRUTH O' THE MATTER.

It may not be generally known, but even that does not prevent it from being a fact, that the recently-much-expelled-would-be-Member-for-Northampton, who was first returned to Parliament by the shoemakers, and then returned from Parliament by the Speaker, was selected by the good cordwainers solely, first and last, because he does not believe in the immortality of the sole! Judy.

A GLARING DEFICIENCY.—Weak gas.

Judy.

FROM BED-LAM.

The flea that bites and jumps away

May live to bite another day. Judy.

COME, NOW!

WANTED TO KNOW.—Old Mrs. O'Brallaghan wants to know whether it is really true that prizefighters who are past work retire to Millbank for the rest of their days. Judy.

## THE BRUTE!

"How is the pain you complained of, my dear?" asked a fairly affectionate husband of his wife, who was slightly ailing. "Only so-so, dear," she replied. "Only sew, sew, is it?" he rejoined. "Ah! a stitch in the side, I suppose." Judy.

## A MISNOMER.

It is no uncommon thing to hear folks speak of a "flight of stairs," but the expression would seem to be self-contradictory, for if the stairs flee they are no longer stayers but goers. Judy.

## A FIT OF THE "BLUES."—Handcuffs.

Judy.

## PROVERBIAL CON.

WHAT relation is the sublime to the ridiculous?—A step-farther. Funny Folks.

## "THE LIGHTS OF L"—YONS.

THE people of Lyons are utilising the current of the Rhone to drive water-wheels and supply power to the electric light. Well, let them. Of course they have a perfect right to do what they like with their Rhone. Funny Folks.

THE HAZARD OF THE "DYK."—Whether it will come out golden or the new deep-brown. Funny Folks.

"RUSS" IN URBE.—General Scobeloff in London. Funny Folks.

## VERY STRIKING 'ILE!

AN Italian is trying to form a company to tunnel under Vesuvius in search of the streams of petroleum he states will be found there. Petroleum? Now, we should have suspected that the base of Vesuvius would have been found full of supplies of the "crater," as the Irish call it. Funny Folks.

APPROPRIATE EGYPTIAN DITT.—"I'll sing these songs of Arabi." Funny Folks.

## EGGS-ACKTLY!

"LOST!" exclaimed Aunt T., as they came to tell her that the new-laid eggs were not forthcoming, as the hens had all taken to lay astray. "Lost! Certainly not. The eggs are all right enuff. They are only temperately 'mis-layed.'" Funny Folks.

QUEER FISH.—Iron crabs and screw-jacks. Funny Folks.

## THE TWO SUITORS.

### CHAPTER II.

JACK LINDSAY had ample cause for uneasiness as he rode over the old familiar road to Shelton. Dissolute as he had become he was not entirely hardened, and he could not look the future which threatened him in the face unmoved. He was on the verge of utter ruin. Only his unprincipled associate, Dick Hunter, stood between him and open disgrace.

He had been in Dick's power for months and was now threatened with the severest measures if he did not within two weeks pay the gambler the large sum of money which he had won from Jack.

At first, when the game turned in Hunter's favour and Jack confessed his inability to pay the stakes on the spot, Hunter gave him a slap on the shoulder or gaily invited him to take a drink, declaring that it was all right, next time he would be sure to win it all back, and so urged Jack on to participate in a game that, in the majority of cases, terminated in favour of his opponent, Hunter allowing him to win only often enough to spur him on with renewed hope, trusting for better luck in future.

It is needless to add that Hunter was a sharper of the most debased kind, well versed in tricks and deceptions of which Lindsay was ignorant.

But the wily gambler had little use for a man after he had extorted from him everything that

he owned. Having served his purpose he was cast aside and replaced by another victim.

Whatever may have been Hunter's nature in his early days he was not now troubled with any disagreeable pricks of conscience, and pursued the even tenor of his way with cool rascality.

He was well aware that he could get no more than was already due him from Jack Lindsay, and that there were but two feasible ways of obtaining that amount. Jack must either win it at play—and that he would never do unless in other company than Hunter's—or he must sell the Lindsay mansion and hand over the proceeds to him.

He felt not a particle of pity for the three women who would thus be thrust from house and home out into the cold world with no means of support.

That was nothing to him, he must look out for his own affairs and other people must do the same.

To do him justice, he had never seen Stella, or perhaps even his callous heart might have softened at the sight of her sweet and gentle loveliness. No; he had borne with Lindsay long enough. The fellow must come down with his cash before the first of the next month or he would have him arrested and consigned to jail, which would involve the disclosure of deeds in Lindsay's career which he would fain hide from the public, and most of all would conceal from his innocent wife.

This was the unhappy state of affairs when Jack parted from Stella, with an unwonted emotion occasioned by a revival of the events of the past few years and an awakening of his slumbering conscience as he realised with chagrin and remorse the depths to which his unchecked course had brought him.

He was sincere in his protestation to his long-suffering wife that he would henceforth strive to do better.

His once ardent affection for her revived in a great measure, as he observed, with newly opened eyes, her tender womanliness, her gentle forbearance, her quiet dignity, and her charm of face and figure. How could he have been so blinded?

No wonder that she no longer loved him as she did when she gave herself trustingly to his care. How had he fulfilled that care?

It was hard to begin anew, at an age when other men were on the high road to fortune, cramped as he was on every hand for lack of means, but, God helping him, he would do it, if only he could get clear of that scoundrel, Hunter. "If"—that word brought terrible visions to the repentant man.

He could not bear to think of what would ensue if he should not be successful in a last desperate attempt to win the amount which Hunter demanded. He would make one more venture, and one only.

After this hateful visit to Shelton he would resolutely turn his back on all low associations, and strive to be a man.

The following afternoon Jack Lindsay and Dick Hunter met in one of the streets of Shelton—Jack haggard and despondent, wretchedly casting about in his mind for some loophole of escape from the dire misfortune awaiting him—Dick debonaire and careless, twirling an elegant cane between his faultlessly gloved fingers, and smoking a fragrant Havana.

"Well, old fellow," said he, after the first greeting, "have you raised that money yet?"

His off-hand manner changed as he made the query, and his countenance assumed a keen and merciless expression as Jack hesitated a moment before replying.

"No, Hunter," said Jack, slowly, "I have not. I came to Shelton yesterday in hopes to obtain it, but I've had no luck at all, and I dare not run any further risk."

"Then there's nothing for you to do but sell the place," remorselessly replied his tempter. "The money I must have. I gave you fair warning, and if you don't come to time I'll make you answer for it. A man can't wait on a debtor for ever, and I've had enough of this."

Lindsay was thoroughly aroused by the villain's arrogant words, so much at variance

with his effusively friendly speech when he was enticing Jack on to ruin. An overwhelming consciousness of the way in which this man had duped him only to prove his bitterest enemy in time of distress swept over him, and he could not restrain his indignation.

"You do well to talk to me like this, Dick Hunter!" he cried. "You, who have brought me to this position by your false smiles and devilish sophistry. I ought to have known better, I confess. I had no business tampering with such accursed things as liquor and cards, but you have diabolically exerted all your strength to push me down into the depths of infamy. And now you taunt me and command me to turn my wife and mother out of doors! Listen to me. I solemnly promise you that I will strain every nerve to honestly earn this money, for I mean to lead a different life hereafter. Only trust me and I will pay you any rate of interest you specify. For God's sake don't be too hard on me."

Jack pleaded with the earnestness of one who feels that it is a matter of life and death.

Hunter stood speechless with amazement, staring at the desperate man as he poured forth his words of indignation and despair. He laughed scornfully as Lindsay concluded, and Jack saw that there was no hope for him, even before Hunter replied, in cold, heartless, cutting tones:

"That's a likely story! Do you suppose I'm simple enough to be taken in by empty promises? What possible show is there for you to make money, I should like to know? I've no notion of being cheated out of my honest dues, so the sooner you close that bargain with Hughes the better."

And he leaned carelessly over the railing of the park beside which they stood, and flicked off the blossoms from a shrub on the other side with his cane.

"Your honest dues!" repeated Jack, white with rage and despair. "You lying villain, how dare you say that, you, the biggest cheat in Shelton, the most despicable man who walks these streets? When I think of my poor, injured wife, I—"

Poor Jack's last sentence is doubtless registered in Heaven, but no mortal knows how he would have finished it, for with his wife's name upon his lips he fell heavily forward and lay prone upon the ground, shot through the heart by the unerring aim of his persecutor.

"No man calls me a liar and a villain and lives!" said Hunter, in tones of concentrated fury, as he quickly drew a revolver from the breast of his coat and fired.

It was speedily done.

The soul of Jack Lindsay was, in the twinkling of an eye, launched into eternity, there to await final judgment. At the age of thirty his race was run. In the very prime of manhood, he, who should have been the support and comfort of his widowed mother and his young wife, was for ever removed from all opportunities for usefulness on earth.

The way of the transgressor is indeed hard.

On hearing the report of the pistol men came running from all directions to the scene of the murder, and Hunter was at once placed under arrest. He paid the penalty of his crime a month later without any manifestation of repentance for his past life.

The body of the murdered man was removed to a room in the hotel where he made his headquarters while in Shelton, and one of the physicians called in, who was a friend of the family, volunteered to ride out to Heathervale and break the sad intelligence to the Lindsays. It was a delicate and painful undertaking, but he felt that the shock would be less than if the tidings reached them in any other way.

It was a severe blow to them all. The mother and sister, though cold-hearted as far as others were concerned, were truly fond of Jack, and felt very proud of him before his evil habits became openly disgraceful.

The estrangement which his rash expenditure of the family property had engendered was forgotten now that he was so suddenly taken

from them, and they mourned for him as deeply as their natures would permit.

And Stella! how often she recalled her husband's affectionate words, his assertion to reform, and his dreams of a yet happy future. It was peculiarly distressing that he should lose his life just as he had determined to turn it to good account. Yet, in the midst of her grief, she felt that it was easier to bear than it would have been had he evinced no sign of repentance and made no demonstration of returning affection.

"He loved me after all," she sobbed, "and I believe he would have conquered his evil propensities if he had lived."

After the funeral was over and the household had settled down as before, Stella sat one afternoon trying to think what she could do, and where she could go, for she had been plainly shown that her presence at The Cedars was considered de trop, and she could not endure the thought of living longer where she was so coldly treated.

A servant ushered a visitor into the room, and Stella recognised Mr. Cole, the cousin who was in possession of her aunt's farm. Twirling his hat confusedly in his hands, after some hesitation he made known his errand, which was to tender Stella a home at his place in consideration of such light service as she might render his wife, who had two little children, and was kept busy from morning until night with her sewing and her other cares, although there was a stout maidservant in the kitchen.

He supposed she wasn't much used to work, he said, apologetically, and he didn't know as she'd think much of it; but for his part he'd like first rate to have her come, and his wife would be delighted to have her company.

Perhaps she wouldn't be so lonesome there, either, as she was here, looking around at the lofty, shabby apartment, and then at the solitary, black-draped figure sitting listlessly in a faded armchair by the window.

It did not take Stella long to decide. It was not by any means such a life as she had once thought to live, but anything was preferable to her wretched existence at The Cedars, and it was surely very kind and thoughtful in her cousin to come to her relief in this way. She knew both him and his wife well enough to feel confident that they would never put any very heavy burdens upon her.

Yes, she would go; and with the decision a great load rolled off her perplexed mind. She held out her hand to Mr. Cole and thanked him heartily as she signified her willingness to leave The Cedars at any time most convenient to him.

It was arranged that he should call for her and her luggage on the second day following, that giving her ample time to pack all she wished to take away with her; and, punctual to the time appointed, he made his appearance with a large spring waggon, and Stella bade good bye to the scene of her troublous married life and to the two women who had shown so little feeling for her.

The parting was brief and undemonstrative; Mrs. Lindsay remarking to Mr. Cole that Stella ought to feel very grateful to him, and Annabel supposing it would seem natural to her to get back to farm associations, as she had been brought up among them.

"Never you mind them snarling creatures," said Mr. Cole, as they jogged along the road to the old familiar farmhouse, where Stella had spent so many happy years with her deceased aunt. "They're cold as stones, both of 'em. Let 'em have it out between themselves; they can't pick at you any more. You have been dreadfully bereaved, I know, but wife and I mean to do our best to cheer you up, and there's the babies, you can't help loving them," with a proud and happy smile as he thought of the little ones awaiting him at home.

Mrs. Cole stood in the doorway as they drove into the yard with a six-months-old baby in her arms, and a curly-headed three-year-old peeping from behind her skirts at the "strange lady."

She gave Stella a cheery welcome, and waited

upon her with such a thoughtful kindness that the young widow could not help contrasting it with the scant courtesy shown her at The Cedars.

Under the friendly and sympathetic treatment her naturally buoyant, sunny disposition gradually emerged from the state of depression which had been caused by her association with people who wilfully misunderstood her. She fell easily into the ways of the household, and soon experienced a feeling of satisfaction in making herself generally useful, deriving comfort from the knowledge that she was really of value to somebody.

Mrs. Cole, who was an intelligent and well-educated woman, declared that she did not know how she had ever got along without Stella, and the children's love for "auntie" was only secondary to that for their parents.

To Stella's childless heart it was balm unspeakable to hold in her arms the blue-eyed, laughing babe, or, at the twilight hour, to press the curly head of little Paul to her shoulder and relate some simple tale or nursery rhyme as the tired eyes drooped in slumber.

This quiet, uneventful life would not have satisfied the Stella of old, who placed great stress on the amusements of the world, and loved to mingle with gay company; but the gentle widow, chastened and wrought into a finer mould by the trials and disappointments which so early came upon her, was a very different being from merry, thoughtless Stella Forsyth.

Her eyes were opened now to see clearly much that was in her girlhood an unwritten page. If she had lost her maiden bloom, which is so justly admired, and which so soon flees away never to return, she had gained in dignity, in judgment, in charity for others, and had done much to cultivate her mind during those unhappy years passed at The Cedars.

She was still very attractive personally, and, as time passed on, had more than one opportunity to exchange her home with her cousin for one of her own; but she still remained quietly at the farmhouse, assured by Mr. Cole that it was no more than right she should live there, even if she were not such a help about the house, for he knew that Mrs. Dunbar would have left the farm to her if she had lived long enough to make a will.

Her regret for Jack was sincere; yet she could not help feeling more than ordinarily interested in the rising lawyer, Frank Reardon, and was truly glad to see his kind-hearted mother when she called at the farmhouse.

It has been truthfully said that the man whom a woman has rejected is never quite like other men to her. She will always feel an added interest in his career, and, so unreasonable are feminine moods sometimes, will take no pleasure in looking upon her successor in his affections.

Stella was no exception to the general rule in her observance of Reardon's steady course toward prosperity, and the increasing estimation with which he was regarded by the people of Shelton. She rejoiced in his success, and thought, with unbounded respect, of the long, hard struggle he had made to reach his present independent position.

Sometimes he accompanied his mother in her drive to Heathervale, in the pretty phaeton which he was now able to provide for her use, and called with her on his former sweetheart. As Stella scanned his noble features and watched the play of emotions over his expressive countenance, she wondered how she could have been so blind to his superior merits when a girl, and how it was that he had never married; for well she knew that more than one lovely woman would gladly consent to become his wife. That it was owing to her rejection of him years before she was not so conceited as to imagine. She now considered herself unfit for so talented a man, yet, as she saw more of him, the thought of his wedding another became exceedingly repugnant.

On a beautiful day in June Miss May Bowman, a stylish, handsome brunette, came to Shelton on a visit to her uncle, Mr. Campbell,



Frank Reardon's senior partner. It soon became rumoured abroad that the dashing young beauty and the bachelor lawyer were likely to "make a match of it," and there certainly seemed authority for such a report.

Reardon was often her escort to the theatre and other entertainments, and all the places of interest in the vicinity were visited in various drives and rides, for Miss Bowman was an accomplished horsewoman.

It was on one of these occasions that they galloped by the old farmhouse at Heathervale, and Stella, happening to be out in the yard, pushing delighted Paul in the swing that hung between the two great maples, looked up just in time to return Frank's friendly bow and receive a scrutinising glance from Miss Bowman. Her eyes followed the pair as fascinated, and her heart contracted with sudden pain as she saw them check their horses and pace slowly on, engaged in earnest converse.

This was confirmation surely of the gossip which had reached her ears; and Stella acknowledged that, if Miss Bowman's mental and moral qualifications were equal to her personal endowments, she was a fitting mate for Frank Reardon.

Of course, when he did marry, he would choose someone qualified to adorn a high social position, someone whom he could look upon with pride and admiration.

Her heart sank as she contemplated her own vanished youth and modest attributes. The advent of this belle revealed to Stella the true state of her feelings. She could no longer shut out the longing for something more in life than was now her portion, the painful consciousness that she loved Frank Reardon with a strength of emotion such as she had never before experienced, beside which her affection for Jack Lindsay sank into mediocrity.

If Jack had lived, she would have been a tender, faithful wife to him, but she would always have been conscious that something was lost out of her life which many people realised.

Now she knew what a passionate, all-absorbing love was. Reardon was to her a prince among men, and she would ever honour and worship him, though she might never be more to him than a friend. No one should ever learn her secret.

The delicately tinted cheek became a shade paler, the brown eyes a trifle sadder, but the gentle voice was as ready as ever with pleasant words, and the sweet mouth was often wreathed with smiles for the friends at home.

She was quite surprised when Frank called one day, about a week later, bearing a note from his mother, which contained an urgent invitation for her to join them on the morrow in a trip to the Glen, a popular resort in the neighbouring town of Penley.

"Miss Bowman has not yet seen the lovely spot," wrote Mrs. Reardon, "and Frank and I, accompanied by her, will call for you in a double carriage about 10 a. m. It is directly on our way, so don't think of refusing."

Stella's first thought was that she could not possibly accept this invitation, and she intimated as much to Frank; but he would not listen to a refusal.

She was staying at home too closely, and it would do her good to go. To avoid apparent rudeness she finally acquiesced in the arrangement, and made her preparations the following morning with a beating heart, for she dreaded unspeakably the ordeal before her. She must with apparent composure witness the happy companionship of the man she had once discarded with one who was immeasurably her superior in attractiveness.

She gave herself a depreciating look as she stood before the mirror, clad in a dainty black and white cambric, which fitted her rounded figure to perfection, her hair arranged in a profusion of curls, as she had always worn it, and surmounted by a broad-brimmed Leghorn hat, trimmed with black velvet.

To most eyes she would have presented a charming picture, but not so from her own exacting point of view.

Prompt to time the carriage drove up, with Miss Bowman, radiant in delicate muslin and numerous fluttering cherry-coloured ribbons, sitting on the front seat beside Frank.

He sprang out and, introducing Stella to Miss Bowman, assisted her to a seat beside his mother, then lightly resumed his post as driver, and guided the handsome greys down the smooth, well-shaded road.

A drive of six miles brought them to the beautiful dale denominated the Glen, where over-arching trees and fragrant flowers, verdant banks and rippling waters, combined to form a scene of picturesqueness with which every tourist's eyes were enchanted. Even the birds seemed to understand that it was a favoured locality, for songsters of every hue fitted among the trees, filling the air with their melody.

Miss Bowman, who alone viewed its beauties for the first time, was charmed with the Glen. She explored every nook and corner, leaping gaily from rock to rock along the little stream, stopping now and then to pluck a bright-hued flower which, with hardy temerity, pushed its way upward from the scanty soil of some crevice in the great grey boulders; or forcing her way through the shrubs to the great pines on the hill-side above, where the ground was thickly carpeted with fallen needles and cones, and the gentle breeze, swaying the tall tree-tops, wafted odorous scents through the air.

"How sensible you were, Mrs. Lindsay, to wear a dress that won't tear on every bush," said Miss Bowman, as she stopped to extricate herself from the grasp of an audacious thorn which clung tenaciously to a fold of her gauzy dress. "It was very stupid of me to wear this thin muslin. See what a dishevelled appearance I present already. And, pushing back her hat from her flushed face, she contemplated her torn garments with mock ruefulness.

"Being country born and bred," replied Stella, pleasantly, "I learned years ago that it requires a pretty stout fabric to withstand the wear and tear of a picnic in the woods. Tell me, in your travels, which I understand have been quite extensive, have you met with many lovelier spots than this? To me it seems very beautiful; but I have not seen much of the world."

"You might go a long distance and find nothing more attractive," said Miss Bowman; and, prompted by Stella's evident interest, she gave a clear and vivacious description of some of the noted places she had visited, proving so beguiling a companion that she quite won the heart of her listener.

Frank and his mother evidently admired her, and Stella felt that it was plain enough what the issue of it all would be. They should not discern her unhappiness, she resolved, and she exerted herself to appear light-hearted and at her ease.

She watched Frank and Miss Bowman as they strolled away together after lunch, for a lover's tête-à-tête, she imagined, with conflicting emotions. Desire for his happiness and approval of his choice (for she had found that Miss Bowman was something more than a mere society belle) mingled with her own anguish and the bitter consciousness that she deserved it all—she was reaping only as she had sown.

Had a little bird brought to her ears a fragment of the conversation between these two as they found themselves secure from interruption, she would scarcely have comprehended its import at first.

"Well, what do you think of her?" asked Frank, with the air of one who feels that there is but one reply to his question.

"She is charming," was the prompt response. "I don't wonder that you could not forget her. I should judge that she was naturally inclined to be gay—coquettish, even, in her younger days—but she has suffered greatly, and become, through her pain, the dear, sweet, loving little woman that she is. Sorrow works so differently on us women! Now I feel as if I might become a very wixen if things didn't go right. It's easy enough to be good and gracious when one is smiled upon by fortune; but I imagine that adversity would bring out my worst points. I'd

rather not try the experiment, anyhow. Mrs. Lindsay is, in my humble opinion, better fitted to become your wife now than ever before—she is more of a companion for you."

"She was always a little jewel," said Frank, "even in her most thoughtless days. But do you think there is any hope for me? Dare I risk a second rejection?"

"That depends, my knight of the rueful countenance, on the strength of your affection," with a laughing glance into his earnest, troubled face. "If you love her as well as you ought to, and I know you do, you will dare anything. Oh, fie! I thought lawyers were proof against all terrors, but you're as faint-hearted as the greenest country boy."

"But you know, May, she refused me once, and Jack hasn't been dead but two years. I'd have tried long before this to win her but for her widowhood—I wished to pay proper respect to her husband's memory, and give her time to forget the past. But I cannot restrain myself much longer—I must speak to her—although she doesn't seem to care for me more than for any ordinary friend," and the self-possessed, keenly-observant lawyer, who commanded the admiration of all spectators in the court-room, heaved a dolorous sigh, and looked the picture of dejection.

Miss Bowman laughed outright. "You are just as stupid as the majority of men in love," she cried; "can't see an inch before your nose, to use a somewhat inelegant expression. It is plain enough to me. Trust a woman for finding out secrets! My advice to you is to take your fate into your own hands, and lose no time about it."

Nor did he. For the very next day after the excursion to the Glen he rode out to the old farmhouse alone, and inquired so explicitly for Mrs. Lindsay that good Mrs. Cole intuitively felt that something momentous was "in the wind," and ushered him into the parlour to await Stella's coming, where he would be secure from interruption.

It was the same old-fashioned, faultlessly neat parlour in which he had received his congé at Stella's hands eight years previous. But how many changes had been wrought both in his life and hers in those vanished years!

It was no longer the hard-working, impecunious young student who came to woo the brightest little fairy in the village, but the popular, talented and prosperous lawyer, who it was whispered would be Shelton's next representative in the House, to whom the quiet, sweet-faced widow was even dearer than her old girlish self had been.

How would she receive him? He had not been able to gain any clue to her feelings toward him, and it was quite possible that she might refuse him a second time; but "faint heart never won fair lady."

Miss Bowman had assured him, and he could no longer curb his passion. He would tell her how dearly he had loved her all these years, how he had found no one who could atone to him for her loss.

She was kindness itself, and surely she could not listen to his tale of devotion unmoved—she would at least give him hope for the future if she did not now love him.

But how long she was in coming. And Frank worked himself into a fever of doubt and expectancy before the door gently opened and Stella entered the room.

Her cheeks were slightly flushed, and her manner was somewhat embarrassed, for it was something unusual for Mr. Reardon to make a formal call like this, he ordinarily making himself at home in the family sitting-room.

He desired to see her on particular business, and of course it must be about Miss Bowman—what else could it be? Very likely he had come to tell her, as an old friend, of his engagement, and she must nerve herself to listen quietly to the story of his love, and to offer him the appropriate congratulations.

She was therefore taken very much by surprise when Frank, as he grasped the hand she extended to him in greeting, losing his usual self-control, burst forth in rapid, incoherent language,



["OH, STELLA, MY DARLING, DO NOT SEND ME FROM YOU AGAIN!"]

while his eyes searched her face with an intense, passionate gaze.

"Oh, Stella, my darling, do not send me from you again! I love you so dearly—I have loved you so long—all these weary years! Can you not give me hope now? It shall be my constant endeavour to make you happy. Think how lonely I have been, and how much difference it will make to me! Stella, will you not speak to me?"

The fair face was rosy red, and the tell-tale eyes were drooped in confusion to the floor. Her lips trembled, and sought in vain to frame the desired answer.

"Do not keep me in suspense," said Frank, hoarsely, pressing hard the hand that he held.

"I can hardly believe my own ears," Stella at last said. "Did you say that you loved me?"

"Most assuredly I did. Is it possible you haven't been aware of it all this time?"

"But I thought it was Miss Bowman—everybody said so."

"Then 'everybody' was very much mistaken. I love you and none other."

"But she—"

"She loves not me but the gentleman to whom she is engaged, a lawyer friend of mine who has gone abroad. He made me promise to make things as pleasant as possible for her during her stay in Shelton, and her uncle also desired it—said he was too old to take her about. We are excellent friends and nothing more."

"Long ago I made a confidante of her, and she encouraged me to try once more to win you. You haven't answered me yet. How is it, Stella? can you love me a little?" And the manly voice spoke the last words with infinite tenderness.

"No," said Stella, "I can't love you a little—Frank started back and turned white—"but I can love you a very great deal," she continued, archly. Then she cried out, with a great sob, "Oh, I do love you, Frank darling! I've suffered so much thinking you were going to marry Miss Bowman, although I knew I didn't

deserve your affection!" And she shed happy tears on the broad breast to which she had been snatched ere she ceased speaking.

Good Mrs. Cole thought the interview in the parlour lasted an unconscionable time, but her heart filled with sympathetic joy when she saw the lovers at length walking slowly down the gravelled garden path to the front gate, and observed the lingering parting and exchange of affectionate glances as Frank mounted his restive horse and cantered away. She would be sorry to part with Stella, but she rejoiced in her cousin's evident happiness, and felt that she merited many future blessings to compensate for the sufferings of her past life.

The next day Frank brought his mother with him, and Mrs. Reardon gave Stella a warm embrace as she called her "my daughter," and whispered in her ear that she must come to them soon.

About this time the inhabitants of Shelton were astonished at the advent of a tall, blonde young man who took possession of Miss Bowman in the most matter-of-fact manner.

Cards were issued for the wedding reception of this popular young lady, to take place in the metropolis two weeks later, and the name coupled with hers upon them was not that of the lawyer with whom she had passed so much of her time during her visit to Mr. Campbell. The facts of the case leaked out, and, while it was regretted that Miss Bowman would not remain among them, many kind wishes for Reardon's happiness with his early love were expressed by the people.

Stella soon won her way into the hearts of her new associates, and she presided with grace and sweet womanly dignity over her lovely home, which, ere many years passed, re-echoed with the patter of little feet and the sounds of childish glee.

Whenever her thoughts turned from the happy present to the clouded past it was with a pitying, sorrowful charity for the misdemeanors of the man to whom she had given her girlish affections.

Looking into her husband's noble countenance, and reading the tender love written there, she thanked God for His wonderful goodness, and prayed to be ever worthy of such steadfast devotion.

But what of Mrs. Lindsay and Annabel? The former turned her well-preserved comeliness to good account, and retrieved the family fortunes by marrying a rich old banker, who restored The Cedars to even more than its former magnificence, and in return ruled the haughty mistress and her spinster daughter with a firm and dauntless hand, this not being his first experience in matrimonial affairs, and his shrewd nature perceiving the mode of treatment best calculated to insure his comfort. Mrs. Lindsay had not contemplated the possibility of such a transposition of the reins of government, and, in secret, rebelled bitterly against it; but an open rupture would precipitate her back to the ruinous state from which she had triumphantly emerged, and she concluded that "discretion was the better part of valour," reflecting with complacency that her liege lord was all of fifteen years older than she, and might be expected, in the natural order of events, to bid adieu to this mundane sphere in season to leave her some years of solid enjoyment yet.

But Annabel did not get on with her stepfather so amicably. Refusing to brook restraint, she wielded her sharp tongue with undaunted freedom, until her mother, dreading the consequences, told her plainly that she must show Mr. Thriftwell more respect or leave The Cedars.

The threat had its effect. Miss Annabel enjoyed the luxuries of wealth too well to forego them, and thereafter placed a curb upon her uncertain temper.

Stella Reardon, as she saw how unmistakably the gilding of gold covered a chafing spirit at The Cedars, realised anew the blessings of her own unostentatious but thoroughly comfortable life, and would not have exchanged it for a kingdom.

[THE END.]





[THE NUN TURNED ROUND. OUR EYES MET.]

## APRIL FOOLS.

### CHAPTER I.

It was a dainty little note, written upon tinted paper, and sealed with a crest, beneath which was the motto, "Ecce Signum." Old Jose, the porter, made a lower obeisance than usual, to hide a smile, no doubt, as he deposited it upon my desk, amongst a heap of invoices and bills of exchange. A faint ascending perfume saluted my nostrils; the superscription, in bold but unmistakably feminine handwriting, stared me in the face.

"The Senor Cyril Hardwick."

Certainly I was the "Senor Cyril Hardwick," a name distinctly English, and sufficiently uncommon to establish ownership anywhere. Yet the delicate missive looked so strangely out of place, and my acquaintance with such of the belles of Menisco as could write even their own names was so extremely limited, I paused for a moment thinking there must be some mistake.

"Who brought it, Jose?"

The old rogue made a second bow, as humble as the first, but I saw his black, beady eyes twinkle with knowing enjoyment.

"Gracious sir, it was a lady, closely veiled—a doncella whose speech was musical as the ripple of a brooklet over pebbles, and whose form

"Does she wait?" I asked, sharply.

From the introspective look of Jose's cunning optics, and the circumstantiality of his description, I knew the latter was purely imaginative.

"Noble sir, no. Having placed in my hands the billet and"—here Jose exhibited a Mexican dollar—"the illustrious incognita departed like an arrow from a bow. May our adorable Lady of—"

But at this point my attention was distracted from the hypocrite's mumbled blessings. I had

opened the perfumed epistle and was deciphering its contents.

It was in Spanish, correctly spelled and elegantly expressed. It dated from the Convent of the Capuchins, and purported to be written by one of the nuns. It expressed impatience of the secluded life and abhorrence of its deceptions. It represented that vows taken under compulsion were not binding; and it hinted, in modest yet fervid terms, that those vows, irksome before my face had become familiar, were now unendurable.

I put down the letter, and sent Jose about his business. I glanced round the office, a dozen clerks were driving quills at full speed. I took up the perfumed sheet once more to complete its perusal.

Would I meet the writer that night after vespers? She would wait for me in the convent garden for one sweet stolen hour ere the moon rose. But I must come habited in woman's garb, lest prying eyes should see a man hovering round the sacred precincts like an eagle in the vicinity of a dove-cote.

The risk of discovery would be great; ay—demi! yes. But a brave and gallant cavallero would surely mock at peril since she was fearless who for my sake dared evils incredible.

"Pshaw!" said I to myself, angrily. "A trick—a hoax. Who is at the bottom of it?"

I looked round the office once more. The dozen clerks were of almost as many nationalities. Four Englishmen, three Frenchmen, two Germans, a Dutchman, a Swiss, a Swede. Not one, I knew, was equal to the task of composing sentences of such purity and idiomatic correctness. I must go further afield.

Hastily I ran over a very limited list of European acquaintances. In the inland city of Menisco, notwithstanding its twenty thousand inhabitants, there were probably not more than two hundred foreigners, all told; most of whom I knew but very slightly.

The reputation I had sedulously cultivated, and to which I was strictly entitled, by-the-bye, was that of a shrewd, hard-working young

fellow, imperious to female blandishments: bent solely upon acquiring a moderate fortune in the shortest possible time, that he might quit Mexico ere the climate, the pestilence, or a revolutionist's bullet should incapacitate him for the delights of spending it. The last person in the world, one would think, to be selected by a practical joker as a likely dupe, or to fall into any cunningly-devised trap, baited with an erratic religieuse.

As I thrust the note into my pocket and resumed work with redoubled diligence, I gave a scornful smile to the absurdity of the part I was invited to play for the delectation of some unknown wag. Cyril Hardwick masquerading as a female, and patrolling a convent garden after vespers! The idea was preposterous.

It was market day in Menisco, and its thousand shops, bazaars, and emporiums were driving a roaring trade with copper-coloured Indians from the interior, with the wives and daughters of prosperous rancheros, with farmers clad in chocolate-hued garments and palm-leaf hats. As for me and my fellow-clerks, employes of the great wholesale house of Smith, Bardolf, and Perigé, we had long before selected Saturday afternoon as a half-holiday, partly on account of its peculiar liveliness, partly because of its proximity to Sunday—when the counting-house was closed, as a matter of course—partly, I imagine, for the sake of old custom in "Merry England."

Our trade was a huge export one, and the influx of strangers laden with fowls, eggs, manioc roots, cassava, and gigantic water-melons for disposal upon stalls in the Plaza in no way affected us; nor had we any merchandise wherewith to conjure the savings of rancheros and hacendados from the pockets of their womankind.

So at two o'clock the ledgers and cash were stowed in the fireproof safe, the keys were divided between myself and the two senior clerks (either of them old enough to be my father, my superior position notwithstanding), and I strolled away, hands in pockets, and cigar in mouth, towards the great square.

I had gazed so often upon the motley scene in the course of seven years' residence in Mexico it almost ceased to possess interest. I regretted meditatively I had not invited Bertie Bardolf, cousin of the second partner, and latest addition to our staff, to join me in the rumble. The boy's naive appreciation of a show to him novel and exciting would have amused me. The Indian women in their checked cottons, the grinning negresses indulging barbaric love of finery by the display of gorgeous orange kerchiefs bound round their woolly craniums, the filthy lepéros, who inspired me with no sentiments save profound disgust and careful watchfulness lest I should brush against their unsavoury garments, would still possess in his eyes the merits of picturesque and eccentricity.

As guide, philosopher, and friend I might have extracted sympathetic gratification from materials which palled upon my jaded palate.

I sucked lazily at the cigar and thought of market days in England—buxom women and rosy-cheeked lasses jogging into the nearest town, behind stout nags, harnessed to substantial gigs or carts, well laden with poultry, butter, and cheese.

I thought of the village from the immediate neighbourhood of which they had come, of the weather-beaten, tumbledown cottages, of the ancient church in which my father used to preach—long, prosy, learned sermons, miles and miles above the heads of sleepy villagers. I thought of the low-roofed, ivy-covered rectory; of the dear home circle; of the lady-mother, with her bonny brown hair, unwhitened by the snows of forty winters; of Ned, and Kate, and pretty little Clara.

I wondered what kind of person Ned's wife might be; whether Kate had really been married to-day, according to the arrangement notified in the latest bulletin from home; and I pondered the astounding information that pretty little Clara, whom I remembered as a mischievous romp in short frocks, had become a demure and fascinating lassie of eighteen, the torment and delight (as the mater put it) of every bachelor acquaintance.

And all this time the perfumed note lay forgotten in my breast-pocket, until a trivial incident brought it to mind, and shook the settled conviction it was part of a plot for my discomfiture.

At a stall, presided over by an ugly Indian crone, and laden with those somewhat incongruous articles, goat's flesh and coarse sweetmeats, stood a woman in the garb of a nun, alternately tasting and purchasing some of the latter.

Her back was towards me, the sombre, shapeless garments might have concealed the shape of a Diana, or have veiled the deformity of a hunchback.

In the pious city of Menisco nuns, old and ill-favoured for the most part, are plentiful as tortillas, and my attention was caught solely by the contrast between the dismal dress of the one woman and the gaudy kerchief, striped sleeves, massive silver ear-rings, and bright leaden rosary of the other.

Half a dozen ragged urchins, who looked as though soap and water were unknown luxuries, watched the sale of the coveted sweets with greedy gravity. Into their midst the Indian crone tossed a small brown cake, studded with raisins. A scuffle ensued, the nun turned sharply round—our eyes met.

I knew the face. Three years earlier I had been wont to stroll at odd times into the Cathedral; not to worship, I am ashamed to own, but to spend an indolent half-hour in the cool, dark aisles, listening to really fine manipulation of a magnificent organ, and to voices clear and pure as one's imaginings of cherubim and seraphim who "continually do sing."

I had learned to look towards one particular shrine, for the figures of a young girl and her duenna, who were generally to be seen there, no matter at what hour. The girl was beautiful, with a saint-like goodness of expression which won my involuntary respect.

With this feeling and faint curiosity as to her

history—aroused whenever we chanced to meet, dismissed the next instant as irrelevant to the great life-problem, to make maximum gains in minimum time—my interest ceased. When her visits to the Cathedral ended I straightway forgot her altogether.

Nevertheless this was the same face. No longer a girl but a woman; no longer a devotee rapt in holy dreams but a doubter, sick with horror at her own scepticism. Her features, beautiful still, were emaciated and almost transparent, as with long fasting. Her lustrous eyes, unnaturally large, had a tired, unquiet look, as though through weary nights they had kept sleepless vigil, watching for Peace, which never came. But strangest of all when they met my gaze there flashed into them for one moment intense, eager recognition and longing. Then she turned to the stall again.

I was surprised, and I confess curiosity was piqued marvellously, and I began to recall sentences of the elegantly-worded missive in my pocket with less suspicion of their genuineness. Although not excoimbe enough to imagine myself an Adonis I was conscious of certain physical and personal advantages which might commend me to a woman's favour.

I stood six feet one in my stockings, could not button across my chest the coat of any man in the office, and could hold a half-hundredweight suspended at arm's length upon the little finger only longer than anyone I knew. It occurred to me also that I had a straight nose, good teeth, keen blue eyes and a brown moustache and beard of unmistakably Saxon origin.

A dark daughter of the South, like my friend the nun, might be impressed by a style so essentially different to her own; might be roused in the first instance to dangerous anxiety for the salvation of a heretic—that most fatal of all Satan's traps for the sex—might even—

Psaw! Cyril Hardwick, you have mistaken your vocation; you should have been a romance-writer rather than head clerk and factor to those eminent merchants, Smith, Bandolf and Perigé. One would think your only books were woman's looks, and folly all they taught you. By-the-by, where is the woman?

I turned with assumed carelessness and strolled back to the stall, looking in all directions for the vanished religieuse. At length I saw her through an opening in the crowd and followed in pursuit. It was necessary to ramble somewhere, if only to kill time, till five o'clock, at which hour Bertie Bardolf had agreed to present himself at my diggings for a non-descript meal which might be called dinner, high tea, or supper, at the option of the partakers. Afterwards I, as Mentor, was to conduct him to a bal masqué of tolerable respectability, a treat to which the youngster looked forward with enthusiastic anticipation.

Had I felt inclined to obey the summons to the convent garden this engagement would have prevented me.

Looking neither right nor left my quarry sped through the Plaza, down a street to the right, across a bridge, and so into a district where shops were few and wealthy Riccos had spent fortunes in building tasteful dwellings and surrounding them with luxurious gardens. For about half a mile she held steadily on her way, never once glancing behind until she reached a long dead wall of adobe bricks.

Here and there it was broken down almost to the ground, and through one of these ruinous gaps two nuns scrambled presently, seized the basket in which the sweetmeats had been deposited and began greedily to devour them.

At the sound of my footsteps they retreated, climbing with much agility the heap of bricks and dragging my incognita with them. For the second time our eyes met. My glance was—or I meant it to be—interrogative; hers was wistful, imploring, unless imagination deceived me.

Along the winding road came a peon with a hoe upon his shoulder, and following on his heels a squaw, carrying a bundle of firewood at her back.

"What place is this?" I asked.

"My lord," said the peon, humbly, "it is the Convent of the Capuchins."

## CHAPTER II.

It was past five o'clock when I reached home, and I entered with an apology on my lips, expecting Bertie would have arrived before me. The table was laid for two and a note, addressed to Cyril Hardwick, Esq., lay on one of the plates. I tore it open.

"DEAR HARDWICK,—I am ashamed to disappoint you, but a pressing adventure hinders me from accepting your hospitality to-day. Will explain in the morning. Yours hurriedly,  
"B. BARDOLF."

"A pressing adventure," I repeated, musingly. "This is not a country in which a strange lad may undertake pressing adventures with impunity. I wonder what mischief is in the wind? Some boyish escapade, I daresay."

I ate my meal in solitude and revolved the events of the day between whiffs of such a weed as one rarely gets in England and frequent pulls at a flash of Poso wine.

I had done an excellent stroke of business in the morning, concluding a contract estimated to put a thousand or more yearly into the pockets of Smith, Bardolf and Perigé, and one tenth of the amount into my own.

I reflected that I was but five-and-twenty and that, bar accidents, in another five years I might return to my native country, having amassed a handsome competence. I wondered in what corner of Old England the lassie was growing up whom I should then woo and wed, for the idea of taking to wife one of those daughters of Beth amongst whom I sojourned, with their hot southern blood, imperfect education, and dreamy, sensual, passionate natures, human volcanoes, who might "erupt"—to use a Yankeeism—at any moment, had always been most distasteful.

No, rather let me aschew woman's society—here I drew the perfumed billet doux from its hiding-place—and place myself beyond reach of temptation by shunning all intercourse with the sex. Here I commenced its re-perusal.

It was very odd. The imploring, emaciated face of the religieuse seemed to come between me and the paper, her lips seemed to plead for an interview. The longer I pondered the mysterious communication the more shaken became the original conviction as to its origin.

Not one of my colleagues would risk incurring powerful enmity by attempting such a hoax, and no outsider, as I believed, would be sufficiently interested in me to do so; moreover, if the wan sister of the Convent of the Capuchins were not my anonymous correspondent why had she bestowed upon me such extraordinary pleading glances?

I unlocked a drawer and took thence an exquisite breechloading revolver I invariably carried when I stirred abroad after nightfall. Without assigning any reason to myself for such unusual precaution, I drew all the cartridges, loaded with fresh ones and put a double handful in my pockets.

Then I replenished a cigar case, lit a fresh weed (I was an inveterate smoker in those days), and strolled out once more.

It was growing dusk and some of the shops were closing. Mechanically, I took the road which led to the convent. The unexpected miscarriage of arrangements for the evening had left it dull and without occupation.

In my undecided frame of mind the slightest circumstance would have determined me to keep the proposed assignation or have confirmed me in its rejection. I bethought myself that for some days I had meditated a visit to a barber, to have my hair cut, and I remembered there was a shop in this direction. I found it positively hung with masks and dominoes, and two or three assistants were hard at work fitting them to customers. The master came forward, bowing obsequiously.

"I will trouble you to cut my hair," said I.

A shade of disappointment crossed his face, but he threw a napkin about my neck and proceeded to execute the behest.

"The senor goes to the bal masqué, without doubt," said the barber, insinuatingly.



"I think not, I replied. What strains of music are those we hear?"

"The ball commences, your excellency. It is the finest of the year. For mirth and intrigue it has no equal—none."

"Do you let costumes?"

"Upon deposit of their value, to be returned, less the hire. Yes."

"Can you make me up as a woman?"

The barber's eye traversed my length of limb and twinkled with fun. But his reply was gravely courteous.

"Your excellency, it is possible; yet I would suggest some other garb."

"As a woman," I repeated, angrily, for I was irritated at my own folly. With a low, hurried malediction upon the obstinacy of a mule of an Englishman, which no foreigner's ears could be expected to understand, unless like myself he had gone through eight years of naturalisation, the hairdresser bowed assent and motioned me to follow.

He took me to an upper chamber, untenanted, placed me in a chair and proceeded to 'frix' my brown locks—not a difficult task, as they had a tendency to curl. The operation was quite unnecessary unless I really put in an appearance at the bal masqué, a point upon which I had not come to a decision. I shut my eyes to enjoy the soothing sensation, and was suddenly startled by the snip, snip of scissors.

"Demonio! what the devil are you doing?" I cried, savagely.

The barber shrank back in deprecatory alarm, assumed to cover gratified malice.

"The señor wished to personate a woman. It is necessary he should sacrifice beard and moustachies!"

And the little villain stroked his own hirsute appendages with complacent satisfaction.

I glanced in a mirror. My horrified suspicions were too correct. The shears, remorseless as those of Fate, had at two fell swoops carried away most of the hair from one side of my face. Whiskers had disappeared and there was a great gap in the moustache.

"Complete your task, and be careful not to cut me," was the rejoinder.

I was bitterly incensed, not at the alteration in personal appearance, but at the food for ridicule it would offer, were the assignation in truth neither more nor less than a practical joke. I decided to keep it, and woe to the author, should he be ill-advised enough to undertake a part in the comedy.

A few more snips with the scissors, a preliminary lathering with deliciously scented foam (barbers know their trade in Mexico), a dozen cunning strokes with a keen and careful razor—the little man's instinct told him my blood was up—and cheek, upper lip, chin were as smooth as a woman's. The operator surveyed the result approvingly.

"If the illustrious one could but dwarf himself, the disguise might easily be perfected," said he.

My response was to push back the chair upon which I was sitting until it pressed against the one door of the room. Chafed as I felt at the surly trick the rascal had played me, I had hitherto suppressed all signs of resentment till the shaving process should be complete.

Now the time had come for retaliation, and I meant to frighten him within an inch of his life. I drew the revolver from my pocket and laid it on my knee, staring at him steadily the while.

"Blessed Virgin!" he ejaculated.

"Señor Barber," said I, solemnly, "you have had your jest at my expense."

"The saints defend us, no," protested the little man.

"But after the jest the punishment."

"Illustrious cavaliero, I swear."

"Swear not at all. Down on your knees and say your prayers for the last time. Not all the saints in the calendar can save you."

"Mercy! mercy! excellency! Por amor Dios."

"Well, I will be merciful. Instead of your life I will have one of your ears, a fair exchange for my hair. I could flick a fly from your eyebrow

at ten paces, but you must leave off trembling in that ridiculous manner."

The poor wretch had fallen upon his knees, in obedience to my first injunction. Now, with a look of horror he gazed wildly around as though searching for means of escape.

"Señor Barber, it is useless. Before you can spring to your feet my finger may touch the trigger, and all is over. I have nerves of steel. Shut your eyes—that is right; steady your head and all will be well. You will lose an ear. What of that? Another will grow, possibly. Now, at the third count, 'Uno—dos—tres.'"

At the word "tres" I lifted the cushion of my chair and hurled it at him. It caught the little man full on the chest and knocked him head over heels, backwards. For a moment he was doubtful, I verily believe, whether that roll on the floor was his debut upon the stage of a new existence, but my laughing visage reassured him.

"Señor Barber," said I, "we are quits. You have had your joke and I mine. But beware repetition, for next time you will hardly escape so easily. Proceed, I pray you, with the metamorphosis."

With a scared and contrite expression, the man of scissors and lather produced from sundry cupboards various articles of female attire.

I left in his charge, hat, coat, vest and trousers, with the understanding I could resume them at any hour before midnight.

To the voluminous pockets of my dress I carefully transferred revolver, cartridges and the key of the locker in which the discarded garments were stowed away.

In the shop below stood a full-length mirror, into which I gazed curiously, with a growing conviction my dearest friends would not identify the tall, gawky female there reflected.

To make assurance doubly sure, I donned the customary mask and domino, and sallied forth, followed by a string of servile compliments from the humiliated barber.

It was dark now, vesper bells were tolling in all directions. I thought people stared at me curiously, as well they might, but everybody knew of the ball, and a man masquerading in woman's attire was no uncommon spectacle.

I determined to look in upon the festive scene for an hour or so upon my return from the convent garden. Meanwhile I made for the rendezvous at as rapid a pace as the short steps I felt it incumbent to take would allow.

I reached the low wall of adobe bricks, climbed to the top of the gap and looked around, listening intently.

There was not a sound, save the sighing of the wind amongst the leaves of the orange groves. The night was dark as Erebus. She must indeed be lynx-eyed who could descry the form of nun or lover five yards from the convent windows.

I descended and groped my way stealthily amongst a wilderness of thorny cactus-plants, spiked aloes and stems of tropical flowers. I had gone about twenty yards and was wondering what might be the area of the garden and how in the world I should find the object of my search when a very soft, low whistle arrested my steps.

I imitated it in the same key. It was repeated. Revolver in hand, for I knew not what treachery might be intended, I approached the spot whence it proceeded, parting the shrubs until I could dimly discern a rough bench, at one corner of which sat a female figure. I seated myself wearily at the other end, leaving a space of some feet between us.

"Señorita, I am here," I murmured, in Spanish.

"Speak English," was the reply, in a voice which, although low, was clear and silvery. "The note was written in very good English."

To this extraordinary response I hardly knew what to say. English! My note was purest Castilian.

"Did you expect me?" I asked, imitating a woman's tone with tolerable success, for I was reputed an excellent mimic.

"Rather! It would have been a 'sell' had

you not turned up. Now, what do you want of me?"

What did I want of her? A remarkable query from a young woman to whose passionate entreaties I had accorded the interview. A suspicion of the truth began to dawn upon me. The clear, silvery voice had sounded familiar in the first instance, and the "slangy" character of the incognita's expressions gave me a further clue to her identity.

"A WORD AND YOU ARE A DEAD MAN!"

A rough hand laid upon my mouth, the cold barrel of a pistol pressed against my temples, emphasized this declaration. At the same instant I saw a dark figure lean over my companion and go through a similar pantomimic performance.

For a moment although startled I was not alarmed. I felt certain my vis-à-vis was Bertie Bardolf, and that we were equally the victims of a practical joke, concerted by our colleagues in the counting-house. But when a second pair of hands seized my wrists, forced them behind me with a sudden jerk and coolly proceeded to strap them together I thought it high time to remonstrate. A twist of my neck removed the impromptu gag.

"I say, this is beyond a jest," I expostulated.

"Drop it, you fellows."

"Car-r-ambo!" growled a voice in my ear.

"Are you mad, English hog? Remember, I warned you!"

A smart tap across the head with the pistol-barrel added force to this admonition, and by no means improved my temper. But by this time I was helpless. Idiot that I was!—to have walked blindly into the trap—to have submitted passively to the will of my captors until it was too late to resist!

"Get up—march!" commanded the voice.

"Dare but to cry out and that cry will be your last!"

In silence I obeyed, reflecting that to risk destruction upon the chance of bringing a few women to the rescue would be the crowning act of folly. In a trice we were standing by the broken wall.

"Mount, señorita!" chuckled my conductor, sotto voce. "It is a tribute due to the sex that you precede me."

Notwithstanding his respect for the sex he retained hold upon the thongs with which my wrists were bound—a simple and effectual precaution against escape—and scrambled over the adobe bricks at my heels. Then came a second female, to all appearance, and a second jailer, then two men in serapés, heavy botas, and stouched sombreros.

It was still very dark, although it grew lighter every minute in anticipation of the moon's rising. I could not make out the features of our captors with any degree of distinctness, but they were formidable-looking ruffians, armed to the teeth—men of stature and bulk. My heart sank within me.

"Amigos, whither do you take us?" I inquired.

"Silence!" was the stern reply, as the nearest brute struck me on the mouth with the back of his clenched hand.

The blow seemed to loosen all my front teeth, but I noticed with savage pleasure that he gently rubbed and caressed his knuckles for some minutes, as though they had suffered also.

"Señorita, permit me to take your arm," said another, with ironical politeness, suiting the action to the word. His example was instantly followed. In two seconds we were marching along the high road in groups of three away from the town.

In spite of the rough usage which might possibly follow I determined to make one more attempt to elucidate the mystery of the entire proceeding.

"May I speak now?"

"Si, señor."

"Where are we going?"

There was a simultaneous burst of laughter. The question appeared to be received as an excellent jest.

"I entreat you, gentlemen, to inform me. Whither do you seek to convey us?"

"To perdition," growled he who had struck me.

### CHAPTER III.

THE road to perdition was broad and at that hour of the night by no means inconveniently crowded. Occasionally we met a peon plodding towards the town, who would rub his eyes in astonishment at sight of such a party marching from it.

Once we crept into the shadow of the bushes to let some vaqueros go by, inflamed with drink, singing and bawling like madmen.

I was about to shout for aid, but the pressure of a sharp knife-point against the nape of the neck was a gentle reminder such contumacy would carry risk, and I prudently refrained. Whatever the motive of the capture might be I did not despair of escape.

Sooner or later my wrists would be unbound that I might eat, and if pockets should remain unsearched meanwhile it would be odd if I could not lay hands upon the revolver and place at least two of the party hors de combat in as many seconds.

It was quite light now; the moon was rising rapidly inch by inch above the horizon. We had reached a level plain of short, stunted grass, across which we were marching, having left the beaten track. There was no longer occasion for silence it would seem, for our guards began to whistle and sing and to crack coarse jokes at our expense.

"Come, *senorita*," cried one of them, plucking off the mask I still wore and casting it to the ground, "let us gaze upon your beauty. A comely *poblana*, in truth, albeit somewhat masculine. Your inches must have been nourished by many pots of *puchero* and dishes of *frijoles*, *doncella*."

"I will back the charms of my maiden," said the man on the right of Bardolf, uncovering the boy's face. "Let the women embrace each other in proof they are not jealous."

Amid much laughter we were hustled together and an attempt was made to rub faces, but my superior height frustrated it.

"Give over," commanded one, who appeared to be the leader. "Is that the *chapparral* yonder?"

He pointed to a low, dark ridge in the distance, which was growing more distinct with every step.

As we drew nearer I noticed the tops of trees outlined against the sky. Presently we were forcing our way through underwood until the leader called a halt and gave a shrill whistle.

It was answered from the depths of the thicket, and once more we pressed onward until we reached a clump of mesquite trees, from which a challenge rang out in shrill treble:

"*Hola! quien viva?*"

"Don Alonzo de Fratas," was the reply.

I started, and for the first time realised our position.

The character of the villain who had assumed the name of Don Alonzo de Fratas was well known to me by popular report. It was associated with the pillage of haciendas, the murder of their luckless proprietors, the dishonour of their women.

Even churches were not safe from sacrilegious attack, and Don Alonzo had been solemnly cursed with bell, book and candle by the bishop of Mexico, and at that moment was under the ban of excommunication, for which he certainly seemed not a penny the worse. I stared at him with a stronger feeling than curiosity.

A tall, well-built man, apparently about five-and-thirty years of age—in his belt pistols and a long, keen knife (something between a bowie and a dagger)—at his back a rifle.

The shade of his sombrero made it difficult to scrutinise the features, but they were regular, or even handsome. Moustache and beard were black as jet.

"You are late, *mio capitán*."

The voice seemed to come from the ground.

Looking down, I saw a stunted figure, boy or man, I could not tell which, contemplating us

knowingly, his head on one side, his hands thrust deep into the pockets of his pantaloons.

"An ungrateful speech, my giant, seeing I have secured for you a wife. Behold!" and Don Alonzo thrust me forward.

The dwarf's head was about upon a level with my waist. A shout of laughter greeted the sally.

"I shall need to bestow frequent marital correction," squeaked the little man, lifting the end of a lazo rope and bringing it down upon my shoulder with all his force.

A still louder shout greeted this witty retort.

"Bring forth the horses," commanded Don Alonzo.

The dwarf disappeared, a tramping of hoofs and shrill cries of menace and encouragement arose, and two horses emerged from the obscurity, which were forthwith appropriated.

The dwarf vanished again, and brought another couple.

The four ruffians were now mounted, and I wondered whether their prisoners would also be provided with steeds, or whether they would be consigned for a season to the tender mercies of the pigmy who was approaching, lazo in hand. The problem was soon solved. He slipped the noose under my left arm pit and Bardolf's right, and gave the two ends into the keeping of Don Alonzo.

Thus securely tethered, we should be compelled to keep that worthy's pace, whether fast or slow, or be dragged along the ground at his horse's heels.

"Adios!" screeched the dwarf. "A fond farewell, *signorita*."

The little wretch approached and raised his hand for some act of cruelty or mischief, but my patience was exhausted. I plunged towards him and he turned to flee.

Although habited as a woman, I had retained the thick boots I usually wore and a violent kick took him completely off his legs and stretched him at full length upon a bed of prickly mesquite grass, howling.

I have no doubt the action was irresistibly ludicrous, for instead of resenting it the horsemen sat still and laughed till they almost rolled out of their saddles; indeed I could hardly refrain from joining in the chorus, when I thought of the figure I must have cut in domino and petticoats taking unfeminine vengeance on the foe.

The dwarf regained his feet, piping choice oaths, but kept well out of range, though his fingers played longingly with the knife at his girdle.

The lazo tightened as Don Alonzo urged his horse to a gentle canter. Bardolf and I trotted in the rear. The pace was easy, but to keep it up took all our breath, and by tacit consent we were silent.

The run lasted for a quarter of an hour or so ere the leader drew rein.

I was breathless; perspiration streamed from me in torrents. Bardolf was in better training. As soon as we began to ascend a slight hill, at a walk, he found his tongue.

"I say," he whispered, "you are a man, of course; what is your name?"

"Cyril Hardwicke," said I, dryly.

"Whew—w!" whistled the boy. "By Jove! Hardwick, I did not know you. What have you been doing to yourself? Where is your hair, man?"

I thought proper to ignore this question, answering it in Irish fashion by another.

"What led you to the convent garden, Bertie?"

"A note from one of the nuns, appealing to me as an Englishman to aid a countrywoman in escaping. Rattling good English it was, too. What took you there?"

This question was still more embarrassing than the former one. Upon the spur of the moment, I answered it with a half-truth.

"To look after you, of course."

"Much obliged. I hope you like the sequel of your practical joke," muttered my companion, bitterly. "Two April Fools, instead of one, eh?"

"April Fools?"

"Oh, yes! pretend ignorance, I would," continued the boy, with angry sarcasm. "You did not know this was the first of April, of course, when you selected a day to hoax a green-horn."

"But, my dear fellow," cried I, impelled to open confession by way of clearing myself, "we are equally hoaxed. I received a note also."

At this point the dialogue was interrupted by a jerk of the lazo and we fell into a trot once more.

It lasted until, breathless and exhausted, I began to think I should drop by the way. Then we were allowed another brief breathing time, after which another burst.

We must have run about ten miles in all when we sighted a second *chapparral*, towards which we appeared to be making, and I began to hope it might be our stopping place.

The wish was certainly "father to the thought," and the thought proved to be correct.

Not a hundred yards from the verge of the thicket in the centre of a small cleared space stood a ruined rancho, silent, ghostly, and charred as though it had been gutted by fire.

At the back of it we found stabling for the horses, and in a room which had almost escaped the flames rough shelter for ourselves. There were logs and a heap of broken firewood in a corner.

A brilliant idea brought the heart into my mouth with the hope of escape.

"Set my hands at liberty and I will light a fire," I suggested. "You can tie my legs, if you will."

Don Alonzo looked at me curiously.

"Gallantry forbids, *senorita*."

There were but three of us in the room. Bertie and I, still coupled like Siamese twins, and the robber-chief holding the end of the lazo.

If I could but persuade him to free my hands the next instant would see him stretched on the floor in death agony. Of that I felt certain. I tried a taunt.

"Want of courage forbids, you mean. Car-rambo! you are brave, *mio capitán*. With three armed men in the doorway and your own pistol on full cock, you fear to loose the wrists. Curse you—cowardly devil!"

The taunt became an anathema. The brute had lifted the end of the lazo to strike me upon the face with considerable force. The skin smarted as though a hot iron had blistered it.

"Aha! how like you the rope's end, *amigo*? It was an *Ingles*, a sea-captain, your countryman, who taught me to use it. Once I was a sailor, you must know."

"Then you escaped drowning for a worse fate," I responded, furiously.

"*Quien sabe?*" said Don Alonzo, with a careless shrug. "But this sea-captain had a plaything, a short rope wherewith he loved to caress the shoulders of his men, and in particular mine. I had a plaything also—a knife, and it chanced one day when he was having the game all his own way I was so imprudent as to wish to join in it. My tale does not weary you, *senorita*?"

The mocking grace, the air of courteous politeness with which the ruffian put this question was the refinement of malice.

"You will not answer? you mope, perhaps? It is like the *Ingles*. When impotent, they sulk; when strong, they flagellate with their plaything the cat of nine tails. I was scourged, I, Alonzo de Fratas, because I raised my hand against the sailor-captain. But I take my revenge when I catch an *Ingles*. Ah! yes."

A glance of terrible and sinister meaning gave point to this vague assertion. He drew a knife and flourished it with threatening gestures.

"Sometimes," said he, drawing the back of the blade across his throat—"sometimes," and he made a motion as though to cut off one of his own ears—"sometimes I take as a keepsake a finger, a toe, a hand, a foot. This time I will commence with a finger."

He walked round us, knife in one hand, a torch and the ends of the lazo in the other.

I felt the flame of the torch, held in wanton cruelty so near our wrists that the flame licked



the bare skin. Oh! that it were fierce enough to snap the thongs which bound us.

Each instant I expected to feel the keen knife eat into the flesh. I shivered involuntarily as the cold steel touched me.

"Kindle a fire, quickly," commanded Don Alonzo.

He had set Bardolf free.

The boy knelt upon the floor arranging sticks and thick lumps of wood in a clumsy fireplace. Our tyrant looked on approvingly, humming an operatic air and eyeing us with watchful mistrust.

His three accomplices came stamping in from the stables, growling that they were tired and hungry. One bore a joint of coarse beef and an iron pot filled with water, and another a handful of beans and a loaf of maize bread, long and yellow.

"Can the boy cook?" asked he who bore the pot.

"Cook?" repeated the knight of the pitcher, in a tone of disgust. "Could ever an Inglesse cook?"

By this time the fire was blazing furiously, for the lighted torch had been thrust beneath it, and the dry wood caught like tinder.

The man with the pot squatted on the floor, tailor-fashion, and began to cut off shreds of meat with a dirty clasp-knife, dropping them into it one by one.

"Watch well!" said he to Bardolf. "This will be thy task, little one, henceforth. It is not meet that men should cook whilst there are women in the house."

"What does he say, Hardwick?"

I translated the sentence and added a few words on my own account, in a low voice:

"Have you a knife, Bertie? Free my hands."

"At his peril," roared Don Alonzo, raising a log of wood and flinging it at my head with such violence nothing but a timely duck saved me from being brained upon the spot. "Fool! what could one do against four?"

The question seemed to occupy his thoughts as he leaned against the wall, keeping one eye upon me and another on the preparations his men were making for supper.

The cook was adding sundry materials to the pot now simmering on the fire gently. Onions, taken from a string, black pepper, salt, and certain ingredients I did not recognise. I could have been amused at the comical earnestness with which the man directed Bardolf's attention, by signs, to the precise number of pinches that must be thrown in, but that Don Alonzo was smiling with an air of acute and sardonic meaning, and some peculiarity in the smile disconcerted me.

"Cavalleros!" he cried, addressing the company generally, but fixing his piercing eyes upon my face with a steady stare, "there is one little ceremony which we had forgotten, a mere form, it is true, but in good society such as ours forms should be duly observed. What say you, senorita?"

"Some of your customs would be more honoured in the breach than the observance," said I, in English.

"Possibly, sir; but this is necessary," he replied, in the same tongue. Then in Spanish: "Search the prisoners. The little one first."

For an instant, half mad with despair, I thought of throwing myself upon him, bound as I was, with the forlorn hope of dashing him to the ground and making a rush for freedom. But the click of his pistol from half to full cock brought me to my senses. Such an attempt would be certain death.

"You will not find much," grinned Bertie, as two of the scamps began to investigate his pockets. "Do not take that, it is my toothache mixture, and there is nothing else."

"Return it to him," said Don Alonzo. "Now for the giants. Cigars? That is well. After supper we will smoke them. A handkerchief? Bah! Carrai! I thought so. Give it me."

With a groan, I sat down upon the floor. A

terrible apathy of despondency came over me. They had discovered my one hope, the revolver.

(To be Continued.)

## THE STORY OF A LIFE.

A SHORT STORY.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

"I HEARD a voice from Heaven, saying unto me, 'Write, from henceforth blessed are the dead who die in the Lord; even so, saith the Spirit; for they rest from their labours.'"

As the solemn words fell upon the sorrowful, hushed throng around the open grave, I looked up at the cold, winter sky and around upon the brown, desolate hills and bare meadows. A few sombre pines near by moaned drearily, and the wintry wind came sweeping down upon us from the purple mountains.

This was the end, then, of this fair woman's life. To be laid in the dark, cold, lonely grave on this bleak winter's day. The end? In one sense, yes; in another, no.

Her beautiful life could not end in that horrible tomb. For three-score years it had shed its sweet perfume upon the hearts and lives around her. Such lives do not end here. She had gone home, where her sad heart would find the joy of her youth, her tired hands cease from their labours.

I knew something of her story, but I longed to hear it all—the story of that lovely old face, with its sweet dark eyes and snowy hair.

She was laid away for her long rest, with the heavy earth upon her heart. The last sad word had died away over her lowly grave, and we slowly and sadly retraced our steps to the places which should know our dear old friend no more for ever.

That evening, as we sat together around the glowing wood fire, I asked the dear grandmother to tell us the story of Miss Margaret's life. She took off her spectacles and polished them slowly with her handkerchief, looking, meanwhile, thoughtfully and very sadly into the fire. Then, turning round to us, she said:

"You all loved Miss Margaret, children, but you could not appreciate her loveliness as one who knew her in her youth, and through all the years of her beautiful, pathetic life. We were nearly the same age, she a few weeks younger than I. From our babyhood we have been constantly together. I cannot remember the time Margaret was not my other self. Our homes stood always where they do to-day—mine here, hers just over the way. Our mothers were dear friends, and the friendship ended to-day in the grave began with our first prattle and tottering footsteps."

The dear old voice was very tremulous, and the glistening tears fell upon her folded hands. She was sadly shaken by the death of her lifelong friend and companion.

"When we were six years old we commenced our childish school-life together. Side by side we plodded through the first stages of our new career, and play-time or study-time we were inseparable. So the years went on till we were great girls ready for the academy in the adjoining town of Alden. No, there is none there now. This was forty-five years ago, my child. Our parents were very anxious that we should benefit by all the advantages offered in such a promising institution. We began this chapter in our lives together."

"How wonderfully pretty Margaret was growing! She was always very slender, and peculiarly graceful. You know how handsome she was even in her old age. She had beautiful, dark brown, wavy hair; her grey eyes were very lovely; her small, pale face, with its delicate nose, fresh, dewy lips and firm little chin, was delightful to look upon. Sweet-tempered, modest, dignified, she was the idol of her parents and admired by all who knew her."

"In our seventeenth year we left the academy. Margaret was to return at the autumn term as teacher. How we enjoyed that bright summer. We took long walks in the woods, rowed on the shining river, and spent happy hours in the saddle, covering miles of beautiful country, during the long summer days. All beautiful things are soon over; the autumn came, and with it our first separation. She went to Alden Monday morning, and Friday evening always returned her to us again."

"The weeks passed on, and Margaret was very happy in her new life. Another interest had arisen in my young life, but it could not eclipse the beauty of my Venus. I was your grandfather's promised wife, and in the spring-time we were to commence our new life together."

"It was about this time that I first noticed a change in my Margaret. I could not define it. In her sweet eyes there shone a solemn, holy light. A tremulous sort of beauty seemed to rest on brow and lip. She grew more beautiful each day. Her sweet reserve was never broken even to me."

"It was a beautiful day in the latter part of the winter when Margaret came to me with a new look upon her pure face—a look which a woman never wears but once in life—when she loves as Margaret did."

"Kate, I have something to tell you," said she; and when she was cozily seated with me in my own room, she told me the story of her betrothal.

"Mr. Edmonds was principal of the academy at Alden. He had taken charge of the institution when Margaret went there in the autumn. He was the son of a widow, who was poor, and lived in a distant college town, where her younger son was a student. Mr. Edmonds was her sole support. His brother was in college at his expense, and, with this double responsibility, he had hesitated about speaking of his love to Margaret. He finally decided to tell her of it and explain to her his situation. He said that he had not the presumption, even if she could return his love, to ask her to wait for him through the years which must necessarily intervene before he could have a wife and home of his own."

"I told him," said Margaret, "that I would wait for him for ever—for I love him."

"So they were engaged. Margaret wore his modest little ring, and I do not think the sun shone upon a happier pair of lovers. He was worthy even of her."

"The spring came, and with the first song of the birds and the perfume of the flowers I was married. It needed but the fruition of my Margaret's love to complete my happiness. We went to housekeeping in a part of this old house, and thus, you see, Margaret and I were still together. She came and went from her school in the sweet springtime, full of deep, quiet happiness. When the summer came she went home with Mr. Edmonds to visit his mother, who had written constantly to her since the engagement. She returned to us in season for the re-opening of the academy, where she was still to teach. She and Mr. Edmonds taught and studied together. He was a fine scholar, and she was fast following in his footsteps. Their love and happiness increased with every passing day."

"The winters followed the summers and found them still working together. They were making plans for their new home together in the near future. The brother, for whom he was sacrificing so much, would soon be enabled to relieve him of much responsibility. She spent many happy hours with me and the little ones, for she was very fond of my babies. She was not a girl to talk—as I often hear of girls talking now-a-days—of love as a trivial thing, and her hopes were too sacred for common conversation. Not even to me did she often refer to it; but I knew how her loving heart looked forward to the consummation of her bright hopes."

"I never saw a man so entirely devoted to any woman as Mr. Edmonds was to her. He seemed to look upon her as a treasure too precious and beautiful for him."

"Margaret's years of waiting were finally at

an end, and in a few weeks she would enter upon her new life. A house was ready for them at Alden, where, after a few weeks' trip, they intended to locate. How I should miss her! But that was a thought I tried to keep in the background, and enjoy the present to the utmost.

"It was a lovely day in October, a week before the wedding day, that Mr. Edmonds came into Margaret's parlour looking fearfully ill. He stoutly insisted that it was nothing but a slight cold, and laughingly refused 'to be doctored,' as he expressed it. The next morning he was unable to rise, and the doctor pronounced his malady diphtheria of the most malignant type. As the long day wore away he continued to grow worse, and at nightfall was delirious and suffering terribly. Margaret followed the physicians into the hall and told them if there was any danger she wished to send for his mother and brother. Kind old Doctor Seaton, who had known Margaret from her birth, laid his hand gently upon her shoulder, and only said:

"Send at once, my child."

"For two days he suffered terribly. Margaret never left him. Pale, tearless, strong, and tender, she was by his side day and night. His mother, too, was with him on the third day, when the end came.

"The sunset light stole into the room as he opened his eyes upon Margaret and smiled. A sunbeam fell aslant upon the pillow and lit up the dying face with angelic beauty. Margaret knelt down and laid her head beside his, and when, a few moments after, we raised her, he was dead. The beautiful young life had ended.

"Margaret stood looking down upon the dead face of her love without a tear, without a sound. She bent down and kissed him, then turned and left the room, waving aside any assistance, and no one saw her that day. When night came a pale-faced, hollow-eyed woman issued from the room, and spent the long, dark hours alone with her dead.

"This was the end of her beautiful dream, my sweet Margaret! The next morning she came to breakfast looking as if years had passed over her head. Her eyes had great, dark shadows beneath them, her lips were drawn with suffering. But from this first morning of her sorrowful life no one ever heard a moan over her bereavement. To her loving father and mother she was the spirit of devotion. Well as I knew Margaret, I did not dream of the strength which lay behind that frail exterior. To Mrs. Edmonds she was the dutiful, loving daughter, and together they took their dead to his childhood's home and laid him beside his father.

"I never, in all the years, heard her gay, bright laugh again. Patient, sweet, strong of soul, unselfish, her life henceforth was spent for others. And thus the seasons came and went, and found her ever at her post of duty, among the sorrowful, the sick, and afflicted. A more beautiful life I never knew. And now the long waiting is over, and she has joined the lover of her youth up yonder."

The dear old grandmother leaned her head against her chair, and with closed eyes and trembling lips concluded the story of her friend's life by repeating, softly:

"We meet at one gate, when all's over;  
The ways they are many and wide,  
And seldom are two ways the same. Side by side  
May we stand at the same little door, when all's  
done!  
The ways they are many, the end it is one."

The latest styles in Paris give evidence of a return to the fashions of the Bourbon courts.

As a parallel to our cotton balls the Parisians belonging to the best families have just had a ball at which the blouse and the cap were de rigueur, while the ladies were clad after the fashion of the women of the working classes. Still, with a due regard to style and colour, they retained a distinguished and elegant appearance. Of course the idea was one which will not meet with very general approval, and it is to be hoped no imitators.

## A TOMBOY.

A SHORT STORY.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

"Miss Lucy will be here to-morrow, I suppose," soliloquised Bernard Lisle, as he tilted back his easy-chair and meditatively stroked his brown beard. "I do hope she has developed into a quiet, orderly young lady who will not bore me to death. She used to be a regular tomboy. Heigho! this will never do!"

And the young lawyer arose and strode into his little private office, where he soon became deeply absorbed in the discharge of his professional duties.

Bang! went a book on the floor in the front office, followed by sounds of ill-repressed mirth.

"Who is there?" sharply inquired Lisle, arising with a gesture of impatience.

"It is I," responded a musical feminine voice.

A tall, slender figure tripped within the doorway, and a pair of roguish black eyes was lifted mischievously to his own.

"Well, Miss I, what can I do for you this morning?" Lisle asked, as an expression of mingled wonder and amusement swept across his fine features.

"Nothing," she replied, demurely, "unless you should care to shake hands with me. I am Lucy Greyson, at your service."

"Ah, my mother's ward!" he exclaimed, cordially extending his hand. "I am pleased to see you. I should not have recognised you, Miss Greyson."

"Of course you shouldn't," she broke in, interrupting him with a merry laugh. "How should you, when you have not seen me since I was twelve years old, and used to make you play horse with me in the back yard?"

Lisle blushed at the recollection of that performance.

"I know you did not expect me until to-morrow," she continued, "but school closed last week, and I completely lost what little patience I ever possessed in waiting for somebody to come after me, so I started off alone, much to the horror of our worthy preceptress. Having nothing to do this morning I ran away from Auntie Lisle and came over here to inspect your office; it's horribly dusty!"

"I feel quite honoured to have been the recipient of a call from you," Lisle said, pleasantly; then gravely added, "Although Marshdale is not a very extensive city, still my mother may be anxious about you, not knowing whither you have gone. And now, Miss—"

"Lucy, if you please."

"And now, Miss Lucy, we will go to dinner."

"Yes, sir," she said, bowing demurely, and accompanying him into the street, pausing there a moment to fling a stone, girl fashion, at an impudent poodle that appeared to have taken a momentary interest in her.

The noonday meal being over, Lucy retired to her chamber to take a nap, and Mrs. Lisle called her son into the sitting-room.

Lucy Greyson was the only child of a very dear friend of Mrs. Lisle's, and her parents having died early in life the kind-hearted old lady had taken charge of her and had watched over her with a mother's solicitude since her eighth year.

Lucy had been away at boarding-school, and Bernard had been studying law, and their vacations occurring at different periods in the year it thus happened that nearly six summers had glided away without their seeing each other.

"Bernard," said his mother, "Lucy has come home to remain."

"Yes, mother."

"I am sure she is not so wild and careless as she used to be, though I had hoped for your sake that she would grow up more dignified and quiet."

"Never fear, dear mother," hastily interrupted Bernard, "she will trouble me very

little. And perhaps I may exert a small quantum of influence over her," he added, with a smile, as he took his hat from the rack and started for the office.

But Lucy did give Lisle a great deal of trouble. She rummaged the drawers of his bureau—to put them in order, she said, hid his papers just to tease him, mislaid his books and called him a finicky old bachelor to his very face when he ventured gently to remonstrate with her. As for Mrs. Lisle, she became completely discouraged.

"I can do nothing with her, Bernard," she said, one day, "and I surrender her to you."

"Very well, mother," replied he, "I will cheerfully undertake her guardianship."

"Lucy," said Bernard, seriously, as they sat in the parlour one evening, "has mother told you that hereafter you are to consider me your guardian?"

"Yes, milord," replied Lucy, mockingly.

"You are almost a woman now, Lucy, and should better employ your time than in idly rambling all over the country. Here are some papers I wish you would copy for me."

"Yes, sir," said Lucy, meekly, as she took the papers and left the room.

Bernard congratulated himself that he had already made considerable progress in subduing his mother's refractory ward, but had he seen the scornful smile that lurked in the corners of her pretty mouth as she swept from the room, he would have realised that he had reckoned without his hostess.

The following morning Bernard asked Lucy for his papers.

"Really, I have not had time to copy them," she replied, nonchalantly.

"Then give me the papers, I shall be obliged to copy them myself."

"Were they very important? It's too bad! I forgot what they were and did my hair up in them. Will you have the kindness to hand me that waterproof?"

"You are not going out in this storm?"

"Certainly; I am not liable to melt."

"You will catch your death of cold, Lucy; I cannot permit it."

"Please do not look so dramatic, Mr. Lisle, the effect is quite too startling."

And with a disdainful laugh she glided through the door and was skipping down the street ere he had recovered from his astonishment.

"Patience! I will conquer yet," he muttered, grimly, and persistent patience was certainly one of Bernard Lisle's most decided characteristics.

"How do you and your ward get along, Bernard?" inquired his mother.

"Oh, tolerably well. Lucy will outgrow all her childish freaks, mother," he hopefully replied.

But Bernard did not see fit to inform his mother of the many tricks that torment daily practised upon him—how she ran away from him one Sunday afternoon and hid in an old mill, and after he had been nearly frightened out of his senses, thinking she had fallen in the race-course, had slipped in himself and ruined his light tweed pantaloons; how finally he had discovered her complacently sitting on the top of the water-wheel amusing herself by pelting moss down at him, or how she had taken old blind Hall from the stable, hitched him to Dr. Atwater's antiquated gig, and bribed the office boy to drive her all over the country, and numerous other misdeemeanours equally reprehensible.

"No, it would only worry mother to tell her these things," he mused, "and, besides, it only needs a little age and experience to take the tomboy out of that girl."

At one of the parties she attended Lucy was introduced to Surrey Vinton, and thereafter flirted with him desperately whenever an opportunity presented itself, just because Bernard in his sage, staid way had cautioned her against the man.

"Where are you bound for now, Miss Waywardness?" asked Bernard, with a smile, as he met Lucy in the hall on Sunday afternoon.



"I am going out riding," she replied.

"With whom?" and an ominous frown contracted his broad brow.

"With Mr. Vinton."

"Lucy, do you know what Surrey Vinton is? He is a fast man, his reputation is bad, he is by no means a fit associate for you."

"You are growing dramatic again, Bernard; this is merely an absurd rumour that you are telling me."

"You certainly do not seem to realise that it is anything more serious. Lucy, understand me once for all, I positively forbid you going out with that man, or having anything more to do with him."

"That signifies little," said Lucy, coolly.

"I had hoped that you would not add notoriety to your unblushing tomboyism," retorted Bernard, losing his patience and his temper at the same moment.

"Mr. Lisle," she said, haughtily, drawing her slender figure to its full height, her eyes fairly blazing, "my reputation is no more likely to suffer than yours, which you consider so immaculate. I propose going out this afternoon with Mr. Vinton, and allow me to inquire by what right you presume to forbid me? Permit me to pass. I am thoroughly disgusted both with you and your narrow prejudice."

A deathly pallor bleached Lisle's bronzed countenance, but he simply said in his quiet way as he stepped aside:

"I will never again presume either to forbid or to advise you."

Lucy did not enjoy her ride that afternoon. It struck her that her acquaintances looked at her rather queerly, and it made her feel uncomfortable. Vinton's honeyed flatteries did not please her; they seemed even insipid when compared with the manly sincerity which ever characterised Bernard's conversation, and she felt very much relieved when she found herself at home again.

She was not noble enough to admit her error, however; the conceit of youth was very strong in poor Lucy, who had much to learn. She assumed a careless, defiant air, and joked and chatted with Mrs. Lisle and tried to tease Bernard; but he was very dignified, and his replies were so brief that she gave it up in despair and retired to her room feeling thoroughly uncomfortable.

After Lucy's disobedience Bernard treated her kindly, but with a studied reserve. He was as polite and attentive as ever, but no sally of hers, however brilliant, could break through the stern, thoughtful gravity of his demeanour.

Lucy missed his pleasant walks and confidential chats. She thought more of Bernard than she had imagined. Her high spirit could not long brook this treatment, and one evening she hastily packed her valise, sobbing bitterly the while, and going to the station took the train for L—, the town in which she had spent her school days.

A few minutes later, Mrs. Lisle, going in quest of Lucy, found the following tear-stained note on her bureau:

"DEAR AUNTIE LISLE.—I cannot tell you how much I regret leaving home, but circumstances seem to justify my going before I disgrace you all.—Affectionately,  
"LUCY GREYSON."

Mrs. Lisle hastened downstairs and handed the note to Bernard, who had just entered the house. He glanced over it, and with an exclamation of pain and dismay hurried out again.

Meanwhile Lucy sat in the carriage that was rapidly whirling her away from home, and wondered what Bernard would say when he found that she had gone, and if he would be sorry, and the tears started from her eyes and trickled down her cheeks.

A sympathetic old Irishwoman in the next seat was about to lean over and inquire her trouble when the carriage began to jolt up and down and to sway from side to side, and finally began rolling over and over. When it stopped Lucy managed to extricate herself, she knew not how, amid the groans and shrieks, and staggering from the base of the embankment fell

fainting upon her face. She was aroused by hearing someone exclaim:

"Merciful Heaven! Who is this?"

"It is I, Lucy," she feebly responded, recognising Lisle's voice.

"Thank God!" he ejaculated, fervently, kissing her with more warmth perhaps than the occasion seemed to demand. "Are you injured?" was the anxious inquiry.

"Only a little scratched, Bernard," replied the now repentant Lucy, nestling closer in his arms. "But where did you come from?"

"I discovered your train and destination through the booking-clerk, and followed you by the express, which came up shortly after your train ran off the rails and rolled down the embankment. We will go home now, dear."

Lucy luckily escaped with only a few bruises. The shaking up, however, made her feel very stiff and sore the ensuing morning, and moreover, be it confessed, she felt very much ashamed of her conduct.

Kind, considerate Auntie Lisle took her breakfast up to her room, and as Bernard did not return to dinner she escaped meeting him until evening, when his quizzical glance brought the carnation in profusion to her cheeks.

After her escapade Lucy sedulously avoided ever meeting Bernard alone, but one Sunday afternoon as she sat in the back parlour having a good cry all by herself he suddenly entered the room.

"Why, Lucy?" he exclaimed, as she started to her feet, flushing crimson. "What is the matter? Why have you grown so solemn and silent of late?"

"Because I don't want to disgrace you all," she sobbed. "Oh, Bernard, I—I'm so sorry I went out riding with that horrid Mr. Vinton and troubled you so, and—oh, dear! I can never, never be like other girls!" And she sobbed more violently than ever.

"We will forget all about that, Lucy," he said, kindly.

"And you will forbid and advise me like you used to?" she asked, timidly.

"If you would only give me the right."

"But I do give you the right," she said, eyeing him doubtfully.

"I fear you do not understand me, Lucy," he said, gently. "Do you love me dearly enough to become my wife?"

"I understand you now, Bernard," she softly whispered, placing her hands in his as she shyly lifted her eyes to his manly countenance.

Bernard Lisle had conquered.

## THE COUNTRY COUSIN.

A SHORT STORY.

(COMPLETE IN THIS NUMBER.)

"But, papa, I do not wish to see her; I prefer that she should remain at her country home."

"She is your own cousin, my child, and I see no reason why you should not wish to see her; on the contrary, I presume you will derive much pleasure from her visit."

"I do not care to associate with vulgar, ill-bred people, even if they are my relatives, and especially now that Mr. St. Symington is so attentive; I will not have a good chance ruined by the appearance of any vulgar country cousins."

"It is useless to argue the point, Rubina, for I cannot recall the invitation, and I shall go to the station to meet your cousin on Thursday."

The above conversation transpired one Monday afternoon between Clarence Spencer and his daughter Rubina.

Mr. Spencer was a wealthy merchant who had risen from comparative poverty to affluence solely through his own efforts; his father was a farmer in the west of England, and Clarence

Spencer himself was located in the great metropolis.

He had a twin sister named Claudia, of whom he was unusually fond; but when he left the farm to enter a mercantile house in town, he seldom returned to his childhood's home; business affairs claimed his attention, and although he visited his parents once in every two or three years, his visits were necessarily short ones.

He corresponded regularly with Claudia for several years, then she married and went to reside in Cornwall. The cares of a family served to decrease her time for correspondence, and when, after three years of married life, a daughter appeared to claim her attention, the correspondence, which had gradually become irregular, ceased entirely.

In the meantime Clarence Spencer had married, and he, too, had a daughter; but it was not until she was nearly twenty years of age that her father discovered that his sister's daughter was born upon the same day that his own child was.

A slight cessation of business caused the past to flit through his mind, and it occurred to him that he had not seen his sister since her marriage, and that he had never beheld her husband and child.

Instantly almost he resolved to improve the dulness of the times by visiting his sister, and this impulse he carried out immediately. While there he learned, as we have previously stated, that his daughter and niece were, as they were afterwards dubbed, twin cousins.

Thinking that the families had been strangers quite too long, Clarence Spencer proposed to his sister a plan for bringing the young people together.

It was his plan that as the birthday of the cousins was drawing near it should be celebrated by a party at his residence.

In order to have the affair pass off pleasantly, his niece, Ruth Stanfield, was to arrive in London two weeks before the birthday, that she might have ample time to become acquainted with her aunt and cousin, and perhaps a few others, before the night of the party.

When the time for the party arrived Mr. and Mrs. Stanfield were to come for a short visit—as the business of the former would not admit of a long stay—after which, either Ruth should spend the winter in London, or Rubina should return with her to Cornwall.

Mrs. Stanfield was pleased with this plan, and Ruth was delighted with it; so, as Stanfield père raised no objections, steps were taken to put it into execution.

However, Mr. Spencer found upon reaching home that Rubina was anything but pleased with his arrangement; she was proud, haughty, and fastidious to the highest degree, and had a great fear of being disgraced by vulgar relatives.

She raised strong objections, as we have already seen; but Mr. Spencer was not to be governed by her whims; he considered the arrangement an excellent one, and he even wrote a short note to Ruth that same afternoon telling her to be sure and arrive at the time specified, as he should otherwise be much disappointed.

Thursday afternoon arrived, and Mr. Spencer repaired to the station, Mrs. Spencer and Rubina awaiting the arrival of the country cousin—as the latter contemptuously termed Ruth—at home.

Sitting in the drawing-room of the elegant mansion, it was not long ere they heard a carriage roll up to the entrance and stop. Rubina drew herself up in a great effort to appear magnificent, and then, as the door opened, she saw, or thought she did, that her worst fears were realised.

Mr. Spencer ushered in and introduced a tall, stout blonde, with a freckled and sunburnt visage. Her dress was a fine cashmere of a greyish hue, with trimmings of garnet silk; a wide violet-coloured sash was tied around her waist, and her throat was embellished by an écaré tie. Her hands were gloveless and ringless, and the finger nails were tipped with jet.



[COULD IT BE POSSIBLE THAT THIS WAS RUTH, THE COUNTRY COUSIN?]

Rubina was somewhat relieved by the sight of a neat grey travelling ulster on her father's arm, for by this she knew that her cousin had not displayed the colours of the rainbow to the public at large.

Mrs. Spencer and Rubina arose to greet the new comer, the former in a manner which, although stately, was cordial and kind; the latter haughtily and reservedly, casting a glance at her father in the meantime, which said as plainly as words could have done that she was very angry with him for bringing such a guest to their aristocratic home.

"Howdy, Aunt Marthy," exclaimed Miss Ruth, in answer to Mrs. Spencer's gentle "How do you do, my dear?"

And as Mrs. Spencer bent to kiss her Rubina heard a smack which seemed to her loud enough to have issued from the mouth of a small cannon.

Rubina shuddered as her father said: "Your Cousin Rubina, Ruth," and then the loud, coarse voice spoke to her, saying, "Howdy, Rubiny?" and then followed that remarkable smack, this time so near her ear that she fairly shuddered.

"Why, Rubiny," said that wonderful voice, "why, Rubiny, be yeou cold? Haow yeou du shake!"

"I believe I do feel chilly," answered Rubina, who could think of nothing else to say.

By this time Rubina had completed her survey and said to herself:

"What a dress! Four or five years out of style, and such feet!"

As soon as she could do so without seeming curt Rubina excused herself on the plea of a headache and retired to her own room; she was disgusted and mortified beyond expression.

"Can it be possible," thought she, "that my father expects me to introduce this girl to my friends?"

Wave after wave of anger and mortification swept over her, and at last she threw herself on her couch and wept bitterly.

What would the wealthy and proud St. Symington care for her when he discovered that she had such countrified relatives? Undoubtedly Ruth might be persuaded to leave off that shocking combination of colours, and it was quite likely that she possessed dresses in which she might appear presentable. Her hair was of a pretty colour—a beautiful golden shade—how did she wear it, by the way? in a loose, awkward-looking coil that was frowsy and unbecoming; but probably she would learn to do it à la mode in a day or two; and then her complexion! But if she would only use a little powder she would be almost pretty, for her features were good after all; but her voice and her dialect—oh, horrors! those could not be changed, and it was quite unlikely that she could either play, sing or dance.

Here Rubina finished her soliloquy with a sigh, and then recollecting that Mr. St. Symington with another gentleman, a young artist, was

to dine with them she started up, thinking to herself how she ever could let her lover know that THAT creature was her cousin!

Her second thought was how she could improve her cousin's appearance without offending that personage herself, and at last she decided that she must contrive to tell Mr. St. Symington that "Papa was very eccentric indeed and insisted upon inviting such queer people; only a distant relative to whom they were trying to be charitable."

Then Rubina wiped the traces of tears from her eyes and went to find Ruth; that young lady was still in the drawing-room, conversing with her uncle and aunt.

"Come, Ruth, it is time to dress for dinner," said Rubina, pleasantly.

"Why, 'tain't, is it? I hadn't no idee it was so late," replied Ruth's loud voice.

The two girls went up the broad staircase together, and Rubina led Ruth, first to her own room, and then to an apartment which opened into it.

"Oh, Rubiny! ain't this a lovely room?" said Ruth, enthusiastically.

"I do not know," returned Rubina, languidly. "I do not like it very well."

Ruth's trunk had been brought up and she proceeded to open it, saying as she did so:

"I hain't got much to show yeou, for my party dresses wa'n't done, and mammy is going to bring 'em when she comes. Are yeou goin' to have company to-night?"

"Yes; Mr. St. Symington and Mr. Langdon, the artist, are coming to dine."

"Well, I think I'll wear this to-night," said the country cousin, taking from her trunk a coffee brown suit of cashmere and satin.

Then Rubina went to commence her own preparations for dinner, leaving the door open that she might occasionally see what was passing in the next room.

Presently she saw her cousin standing before the mirror brushing her hair and was struck almost dumb with amazement; before her stood a veritable Lady Godiva, for the waving golden mass reached nearly to her knees, or so at least it seemed to Rubina; she, poor girl, drew back into the shadow and pinned on her raven switch and puffs with unusual precision.

When she had completed the operation she turned to look at Ruth again, and saw that her hair was arranged in one massive plait, beginning at the neck and tied just below the waist with a ribbon of the same shade as her dress; the ends hung gracefully below the tie in two close, silky curls.

It was a pretty style, although Rubina thought it a trifle too much like school-girl carelessness for a young lady of twenty years.

The country cousin was ready to go down in a very short time, and Rubina was forced to acknowledge that she presented a much better appearance than at first, although her complexion, voice and dialect rendered her anything but attractive.

The dress, although not very well fitting, was stylish and pretty, and the cream-coloured lace tie was really elegant.

"Let me put this white camellia in your hair, cousin," said Rubina.

Then the two girls went down the stairs, Rubina's lavender silk train rustling with every step.

Mr. St. Symington had already arrived, and was in close conversation with Mr. Spencer, but he arose and came forward as the cousins entered, bending over Rubina's hand with great empressement, and uttering a polite phrase when introduced to Miss Stanfield.

Just then Mr. Langdon was announced, and he, after the introduction and greetings, monopolised Rubina's time so entirely that she had no opportunity to speak with her lover, who had drawn Ruth into a corner and seemed to be holding quite an animated conversation with her, although in such low tones that not a word could be distinguished by Rubina, who was relieved at not hearing the coarse, loud voice of her cousin.

She informed Mr. Langdon that Miss Stanfield was a country cousin, really ignorant and ill-



bred; but papa was so eccentric that he insisted upon inviting her to his house.

Then the dinner bell rang, and Rubina thought that Mr. St. Symington would offer his arm to her as he usually did upon such occasions, but to her surprise she saw that he was taking her cousin, and she therefore accepted the escort of the young artist as graciously as possible, although she was inwardly much chagrined.

Rubina was constantly in fear lest Ruth should make some atrocious remark which should display her ignorance and rusticity fully; but nothing noticeable occurred during the meal, and when they returned to the drawing-room Rubina was just beginning to breathe freely when Ruth said, loudly:

"Yeon play the pianny, don't yeon, Rubiny?"

"Yes, a little," returned Rubina, modestly.

"Do you play, Ruth?"

"Well, I should just think I do."

"Shall we have the pleasure of hearing you play, Miss Stanfield?" asked Mr. St. Symington, respectfully.

"All right, by-and-bye; but I want to hear Rubiny play first."

At this Rubina arose and proceeded to the piano, thinking that in so doing she would at least stop Ruth from making any more such remarks for a time.

Thinking to astonish her cousin by displaying her knowledge of music, Rubina selected a difficult piece which required considerable technical skill. However, her playing was not particularly interesting; although she played with great precision the varied expression of the piece was entirely lost, and it seemed dull and monotonous.

When she had finished, Mr. Langdon requested her to sing, remarking upon the beautiful harmonies of the piece she had performed. She answered modestly that she thought the chords rather odd, and Mr. Symington said:

"You are right, Miss Spencer, the chords are decidedly odd, but the tout ensemble is perfect."

"Tooting cymbal?" exclaimed Ruth. "I did not hear it, I thought it was a real pianny, but I did not hear any cymbal."

Rubina was so mortified that she could have cried aloud with vexation; but she thought it prudent not to hear Ruth's remark, so she turned to Mr. Langdon, asking him sweetly what she should sing; that gentleman, however, replied languidly that he had no choice, and Mrs. Spencer observed:

"Perhaps Mr. St. Symington will choose for you, my dear."

"Oh, Mr. St. Symington, will you?"

"Do you sing 'Smile Again,' Miss Spencer?"

"I do," returned Rubina, not liking the choice. "I have it, but I am afraid that I am not very familiar with it; will you not sing it yourself, Mr. St. Symington, if I play the accompaniment?"

"That is the very thing, Mr. St. Symington," said Mr. Spencer.

As Rubina played the accompaniment she thought to herself:

Though you may forget the singer,  
You should not forget the song.

Mr. St. Symington had a fine tenor, and the song was well rendered.

"Smile again, my dearest love;  
Weep not that I leave you;  
I have chosen now to rove—  
Bear it, though it grieve you.  
See, the sun, and moon and stars  
Gleam the wide world over,  
Whether near or whether far,  
On your loving rover!

"And the sea has ebb and flow;  
Wind and cloud deceive us;  
Summer's heat and winter's snow  
Seek us out to leave us.  
Thus the world grows old and new,  
Why should you be stronger?  
Long have I been true to you,  
Now I'm true no longer!

"As no longer yearns my heart,  
Or your smiles enslave me,  
Let me thank you, ere we part,  
For the love you gave me.  
See the May-flowers wet with dew  
Ere their bloom is over:  
Should I not return to you,  
Find another lover!"

Something in Mr. St. Symington's manner impressed Rubina with the idea that he intended the song to apply in the present case, and she felt sure that he was disgusted with that vulgar country cousin, and that he would never come near her again.

"Oh, Mr. St. Symington!" exclaimed Mrs. Spencer, "that was a beautiful song! Will you not favour us with another?"

"Do you ever sing, Langdon?" he asked.

"Never," replied the artist, concisely.

"Miss Spencer," said Mr. St. Symington, "do you sing the 'Stricken Deer'?"

Rubina said that she did, this time scarcely knowing whether to be pleased or otherwise with his selection; but as he sang:

"Oh, what is love made for if 'tis not the same  
Through joy or through torment, through honour  
or shame?"

she decided that she had misinterpreted his meaning, or else that he chose them merely as favourite songs.

When he had finished singing Rubina rose from the piano, saying as she did so:

"Come, Ruth, it is your turn now," thinking to herself, "I do not believe the creature knows one air from another; of course she cannot play anything, and she will know better than to try."

But to her great chagrin Mr. Langdon led Ruth to the piano, and the latter, after an awkward pause, raised her hands and held them for a moment over the keys, and then, crash! crash! bang! went the piano, in a manner that made Rubina feel as though she should scream outright.

Ruth wheeled round on the music stool, saying, composedly:

"This pianny is different from ourn, I don't b'lieve I can play it."

"Well, my dear, perhaps then you had best not try," said Mrs. Spencer, calmly. "But you can sing, can you not?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Well, then, I will play for you, and you shall sing," returned Mrs. Spencer, taking her place at the piano. "What will you sing, my dear?"

"Oh! Aunt Marshy, I think 'The Christian's Home in Glory' is the prettiest of anything."

"I wonder if we are going to have a prayer-meeting?" said Rubina, in a low tone, to Mr. St. Symington; and then, glad of an opportunity, she reiterated the statement she had made to Mr. Langdon.

Contrary to her expectation, Mr. St. Symington responded that he thought Miss Stanfield a very pleasant young lady. He had met her before, more than a year ago—in fact, he was quite well acquainted with her.

By this time Ruth had commenced to sing; her voice was really fine; but her rendering of the words must have been heard in order to be appreciated.

When the song was finished Mrs. Spencer asked Ruth if she always sang sacred songs, and she replied affirmatively.

It seemed to Rubina as though the evening would never draw to a close, but it did at last, to her great relief, as she was constantly in fear lest Ruth should betray even more ignorance than she had yet done—if such a thing were possible.

Rubina was so excited over the events of the day, and so deeply mortified, that it was a long while before she fell asleep that night; indeed it was not until the small hours of morning, and when she did sleep she dreamed that she saw Cinderella and the prince dancing at her birthday party, but, lo! the vision came nearer, and she recognised the features of Mr. St. Symington and Ruth Stanfield.

It was nearly noon when she awoke with a dull, racking pain in her head, and as soon as she had time to collect her scattered senses she resolved to carry out a plan which her fertile brain had suggested.

She did not go downstairs that day nor the next, nor for the two weeks following; to tell the truth, she was so angry and so deeply mortified that at first she felt really ill, and thinking that

if she continued to appear so the party would not be given, she thought it best to be ill.

Mr. Spencer shrewdly guessed at the cause of her illness, and after summoning a physician once, he left her to her own devices.

In spite of her illness preparations were made for the approaching festivities, and the orders given to the dressmaker for the party dress.

As the time drew near Rubina began to bemoan the fact that she should be too ill to participate in the great event, and that it must be indefinitely postponed. Ruth spent a small portion of the time with her each day, but, although Rubina treated her civilly, she almost hated the sight of her country cousin.

She kept her room very dark that she might not see the vision of tan and freckles, and was always much relieved when left alone.

The day previous to her birthday came at last, and with it came Mr. and Mrs. Stanfield; the latter, while yet in her travelling dress, made a short call in Rubina's room; she seemed to be a quiet, pleasant, and well-bred person, and Rubina was instantly reminded of her father's face in looking upon that of his sister. She thought it strange that a lady who seemed so refined should have such an ignorant daughter.

To Rubina's consternation the preparations for the party continued, and the doctor called to see her the next morning, and after feeling her pulse and inspecting her tongue he pronounced her quite well enough to have a party, provided she did not dance too much.

However, she persisted in keeping her room, thinking that she would convince her parents in time to stop the party. But the dinner hour approached, and Rubina was in despair; she could hear Ruth in the next room dressing for dinner, and she knew that she should be obliged to receive her guests that evening, whether she wished to do so or not, as it was already too late to stop it.

She was in a most unenviable frame of mind when there came a light tap at the door, and she said "Come in!" as though she were pronouncing her own death sentence. The door opened, and a sweet voice said:

"I had a headache, and I thought I would dress for the party before dinner, so that I could rest afterwards, before the party."

And a tall form glided into the room, clad in a marvellously beautiful costume of azure satin. The face was fair and slightly rosy, the hair curled across the forehead in close, natural rings, and at the back of the head was dressed in soft, silky ringlets of a countless number, hanging below the waist and fastened at the top by a tortoise shell comb. Pearls shone in her hair, on her throat, arms, and in her ears.

Rubina gazed at her like one entranced. Could it be possible that this was Ruth, the country cousin?

The beautiful vision came toward her, saying:

"How do you like me, dear?"

The vulgar dialect was missing, the voice she had thought loud and coarse seemed changed also. The tan and freckles were invisible, and Rubina stared at her rather more than politeness would admit to see if there were any traces of powder on the fair face; but, no, the skin was clear and fair, and as Rubina gazed upon her she recollected what she had said to her father nearly three weeks before, and then she knew that she had been humbugged.

"I do not believe you are half awake, cousin, for if you were you would not stare at me in such an absent way," said the sweet voice again.

"I believe I am a little sleepy," said Rubina, with ready tact; and then, comprehending the whole situation, "How nice you look, Ruth. Come here and let me kiss you; why, I have been ill so much since you have been here, and the room has been so dark, that I have scarcely seen you before; your dress looks quite like a party, and the sight of it makes me feel like trying my own dress. I believe that stupid old doctor was right after all, and I think I shall try the experiment of dressing."

"I really believe it will do you good to take a little exercise."

"Do you? Well, I begin to think so myself; but, Ruth, I think your dress is beautiful; the tout ensemble is perfect," said Rubina, remembering how the same expression had been used two weeks before.

"Do you think so, *ma chère*?" said her country cousin.

Poor Rubina could have screamed aloud, she was so deeply mortified; but instead, she appeared calm and smiling, and talked just as complacently as though she had not just discovered that her parents had been playing her a cruel trick to punish her for her pride and arrogance.

A few hours later the "twin cousins" stood side by side among their assembled guests; there was a beautiful contrast, for while Ruth was tall and fair as a lily, Rubina was petite and dark; the azure satin and pearls were as becoming to one as the heavy garnet silk and dead gold jewellery to the other.

Mr. St. Symington approached them at this moment; his manner to Rubina was extremely polite, but to Ruth it was more than that. Presently he asked her to play, and she took his arm and crossed the room to the piano.

Rubina wondered if the country cousin could play, and if the performance of a fortnight previous was only a piece of acting; but she had not long to wonder, for there arose from the piano at this moment the most divine floods of harmony, the most perfect bursts of melody—at least, so thought Rubina—that she had ever heard.

The audience seemed spell-bound, and when it was finished they begged her to sing. Instantly she plunged into Gabriel's beautiful song "When Sparrows Build."

Mr. St. Symington stood beside her to turn the music, and as she began the second verse Rubina, who was watching him, saw his face suddenly flush and pale, and then the well-cut lips quivered for a moment, but were firmly compressed the next.

"Oh, my lost love, and my own, own love,  
And my love that loved me so,  
Is there never a chink in the world above  
Where they listen for words from below?  
Nay, I spoke once, and I grieved thee sore;  
I remember all that I said,  
And now thou wilt hear me no more, no more,  
Till the sea give up its dead."

Rubina watched the pair at the piano closely, but she saw nothing more worthy of note; but after the song was finished she was joined by Mr. Langdon, who remarked:

"Was not that song a sad one? Miss Stanfield sang as though she actually felt it."

Rubina felt that after what had already happened nothing which she might learn in regard to Ruth would surprise her; she had been happy indeed to find that Ruth was not the awkward, vulgar person that she had supposed her to be; but now a feeling of unconquerable envy and jealousy possessed her; this girl who had played the rustic with such success was evidently taking her own lover away from her and winning the admiration of the entire company, while she remained unsought and unnoticed.

The dancing commenced soon, and Rubina saw that Mr. St. Symington was not going—as had been his custom—to ask her hand for the first dance; so she took Mr. Langdon's proffered arm, thinking that although she did not care for the artist, Mr. St. Symington should see that she had admirers, even if he had deserted her.

Ruth danced very gracefully, and when the dance was over and Rubina and her partner sat down to rest, they saw Ruth and Mr. St. Symington gliding off in a slow waltz. A few moments later they disappeared through a doorway, and Rubina conjectured that they were going to the conservatory.

The dancing went on, and Rubina had no opportunity to note her cousin's actions until the supper hour arrived, when she saw her again, still accompanied by Mr. St. Symington. Rubina thought of what she said to her father, and then, with a sigh, she thought that her fear of losing her lover had been verified, but in a different manner from what she had expected; still, she might be mistaken; perhaps he was merely actuated by a desire to make the acquaint-

ance of her cousin; but he had met Ruth before—perhaps they had been lovers. What must he have thought when she told him that she was an ignorant country cousin?

The party came to an end at last, as all parties do, and Rubina was free to return to her own room. She was disgusted with her cousin, with Mr. St. Symington, with the young artist, and with herself most of all.

Just as she commenced brushing her raven locks there was a tap at the door. She knew it was Ruth, and she had rather not have seen her until morning; but she had decided to make the best of everything, and never let anyone know what she had suffered; so she opened the door, saying:

"Come in, dear. Oh! aren't you tired?"  
"Not very," responded Ruth, brightly. "I have something to show you;" and she held out her hand.

A brilliant solitaire gleamed on the engagement finger.

"Sit down, carissima, and tell me all about it," said Rubina, who felt as though she should choke.

Ruth sat down, and dropping her face in her hands, told the following tale:

"It is three years since I first met him; he was spending the summer with a friend of mine, who happened to be my cousin. Well, he was very attentive to me from the first, and when he went away we were engaged. My parents approved of it, but said that I was too young to marry, and that they should not think of permitting the wedding to take place for a year, at least. He was impatient, and really wished the wedding to be celebrated immediately; but papa refused peremptorily, and he was obliged to make the best of it. We corresponded until Christmas, and then he came to see me; I hardly know how to tell you, but I was young and thoughtless, and I did not always, during his absence, treat other young men with the dignified reserve that an engaged young lady ought to maintain. Cousin Will, the only one save my parents who knew of our engagement, told Lester—of course you know that Mr. St. Symington's name is Lester—that I had been flirting. Perhaps I merited the accusation, but certainly no one was ever more innocent of any such intention than I was. Lester told me that he heard that I had been flirting, and I knew at once that no one except Will would have taken the trouble to tell him. I did not like the way in which he spoke, and I told him that I thought he ought to have had more confidence in me than to set spies to watch me; and he said that if he had, he was afraid he should have found it misplaced. I was angry then, and I did not care what I said, and we quarrelled. I was sorry enough as soon as he was gone, but he did not—as I had hoped that he would—ever come back or write a word to me, and before long I heard that he had gone abroad. I never heard a word concerning him after that until I came here, and I presume you recollect the songs that he sang that evening; I scarcely knew what to think then, but I have since discovered that I never cared half as much for anyone else as I did for him; and to-night I chose the song I did, thinking that if he still cared for me, it would induce him to speak again. He did speak, and now I am wearing the same ring that I returned to him nearly three years ago; and we shall be married at Christmas, just four weeks from to-day."

Rubina did not fall asleep until daybreak, but when she did it was with an humble resolve to bury all her unkind feelings where none but herself should ever suspect them; certainly Ruth had the first claim to her old lover, and she would never let anyone suspect that she cared.

We read of hearts being caught on the rebound, and, although we never believed in it, we are led to think that it may sometimes be so; for when Mr. Langdon called to see Rubina, the next day she was so gracious that he took courage and offered his heart and hand, saying that he had been so poor that he had not dared to do so sooner; but he had lately inherited a small fortune, not enough to make him at all wealthy, but sufficient to insure him a comfort-

able income; and now that Mr. St. Symington was engaged to her cousin, he had dared to hope that she might care for him.

Rubina was inwardly so mortified that she thought the young artist was better than no lover at all, and she feared that some vulgar person would say that Mr. St. Symington had jilted her, and she found that she really liked Mr. Langdon very well, although she had never thought of it before; so she accepted him.

He asked her father's consent the same evening; it was granted, and Ruth, upon hearing of it, said:

"Oh, Aunt Marcia! it is all coming out like a fairy tale, and Rubina must come home with me, and we will have a double wedding."

The trousseau of the twin cousins was speedily made ready, Mrs. Stanfield and Ruth remaining in town until the week before Christmas; then Rubina accompanied them home, and her parents and the two happy swains followed them on the day before Christmas.

So Rubina was married at the home of her vulgar country cousin, and notwithstanding the fact, we think she is tolerably happy, except when she remembers their first meeting.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

No less than eight large balls, which had been projected in fashionable French society to take place during the first three weeks of February, were definitely given up, owing to the recent financial crisis.

PRINCE ARNULPH of Bavaria, the youngest son of the King, has voluntarily joined the Austrians who are fighting in Herzegovina, and many other officers of high rank will follow his example if the insurrection should assume a Pan Slavist character.

THE British Government has notified to the Khedive its acceptance of his Highness's offer of the Kasr-en-Nousha Palace for the use of the Princes Albert Victor and George of Wales during their stay at Cairo. A special steamer will also be placed by the Khedive at the disposal of their Royal Highnesses for visiting places of interest on the Nile.

GRAND preparations are already being made in Moscow for the coronation of the Czar. The throne-room at the Kremlin will be restored to as nearly as possible the same appearance as it presented in the days of Ivan the Terrible, and the walls will be decorated with frescoes in the ancient Byzantine style. During the rejoicings, which last several days, the interior courts of the Kremlin will be illuminated by the electric light, by means of a number of Siemens lamps.

AN exhibition of arts and industries of Worcestershire is to be opened on July 17 at Worcester.

DESDEMONA figures in the genealogical tree of the Hohenzollern family, according to a theory recently put forth by the great Shakespearean scholar Theodor Elze. Elze is of opinion that the English poet derived the history of Othello's victim, of her elopement and of the suit brought against the Moor for witchcraft by her father, Count Collalto, from the family papers of the Italian Collalti (Hohenzollern), whose coat-of-arms and colours are identical with those of the German Royal Imperial House. Desdemona therefore was née Collalto or Hohenzollern.

A PERFORMANCE similar to the celebrated Oberammergau Passion-Play is now being given at the Casino of Hottingen (Zurich). It consists of a series of twenty-three tableaux vivants, in which twenty persons take part. All the principal events connected with the Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ are represented after pictures by the old masters. Every detail has been carefully attended to, and it is said that the general effect is very striking and beautiful.

THE Duc d'Aumale is said to have realised 1,750,000 francs of Consolidateds in order to



enable one of his nephews to meet his Bourse obligations.

SIR JOHN LUBBOCK intends to take the earliest opportunity of moving for a Select Committee of the House of Commons to inquire into the state of forest and woodlands, and to ascertain whether steps can be taken to render them more productive.

It is interesting to note that the honour of being the "father" of the British army is claimed for General G. Macdonald, honorary colonel of the Bedfordshire (16th) Regiment. General Macdonald was born on October 10, 1784, his present age therefore being nearly ninety-seven and a half years. He entered the army at the latter end of 1805, and has seen much active service, the last battle in which he was engaged being Waterloo, where he was three times wounded, and mentioned in despatches for conspicuous gallantry.

An act of extraordinary munificence and benevolence is recorded on the part of a Mrs. Frances Grant, of Rock Ferry, near Liverpool. This lady has given £100,000 to be invested, the interest of which is to be applied to the relief of the deserving poor.

The death is announced as having taken place at his residence at Plymouth, at the advanced age of ninety-five, of Adm. Robert Loney, the "father" of the British navy, who for the long period of eighty-four or eighty-five years had been connected with the naval arm of the public service. Born in 1787, he entered the navy in September, 1797, as a boy on the *Atlas*. For the services which he rendered during the civil war in Portugal in 1835, in conjunction with those he afforded by the protection of British interests, he was rewarded with the rank of commander in January, 1837. From that time he was on the half-pay list, being appointed a captain in August, 1852, and placed on the retired list with the rank of rear-admiral in April, 1870. He was promoted to be retired vice-admiral in August, 1873, and retired admiral June, 1879.

GENERAL GRANT has been placed on the retired list of the American army with a salary of 10,000 dollars (£2,000) a year.

The Lord Chancellor's Bill defining married women's property has been printed. It makes married women liable to the parish for the relief of their husbands; renders the wife liable also to criminal proceedings in the event of her committing any unlawful act against the property of her husband; it limits the liability of husbands in respect of debts incurred by their wives prior to marriage; and it strictly arranges the conditions under which a married woman can hold, acquire, and dispose of property.

It is said that one of the novelties of the season will be a fancy dress ball, in which all the ladies will appear in costumes representing birds.

BARON HENRY DE WORMS is credited with the latest mot of the lobby, which describes the "A B C" of Gladstone's Government as anarchy, Bradlaughism, and oldtore.

AN English and American Association have put money together to take the Galté Theatre in Paris for the summer, in order to give performances of English plays.

BARNUM intends to have on show the handsomest man in the world to match the handsomest lady. The applicants for the post are legion.

The British Electric Light Company show a most beautiful form of the light for ordinary household purposes. The lamps are simply glass vases of various heights from eight or nine inches to three feet. Within the mouth of each vase is suspended a little oval globe from which shines out a brilliant but soft electric light. Lamps of this kind would be most effective on the dinner table.

The silk manufacturers of England intend to hold an exhibition of their products this year. It will be under the distinguished patronage of the Duchess of Teck. We see the question is thus put by a contemporary summing up this proceeding: "If British silks are really equal to French silks it must be a strange caprice—a silly gallowmania—that leads to their rejection."

But still this gallowmania exists; fashion clamours for foreign goods because they are foreign, and for no other reason. There is no news surely in this, none to the trade. Fashion, it is right to argue, may also be attacked on its weak side, and be led to clamour for English goods because they are under the patronage of Royalty, and the leading ladies of the land may be led to clamour for English goods from the teachings of common sense, as the public's eyes will show them at this forthcoming exhibition that English silks, most especially Spitalfields, are better than foreign silks.

#### THE BLACKSMITH'S DAUGHTER.

THE blacksmith lays his hammer down,  
And rests his muscles, stiff and weary,

While from the church-spire in the town  
The noontide chimes ring loud and cheery.

He sits the open door beside,  
And smiles, of sweet content a winner,  
When on his vision bursts his pride,  
His daughter Flora, with his dinner.

Unto him every morsel seems  
As delicate and sweet as honey,  
For she who brought it lights his dreams,  
And makes his hours light and sunny.

He sees her mother in her eyes,  
And hears her voice in all she utters,  
As thoughts of other springs arise,  
When May's young leaflet gaily flutters.

Ah! all his ways more happy seem,  
And all his labour flows more pleasant;  
But, oh! he ne'er does pause to dream  
The future must succeed the present.

Beside the fire the bright-eyed boy  
Looks on her while his brown cheek flushes,  
And, as he smiles, the maiden coy  
Smiles back again amid her blushes.

He doesn't fancy in the spring,  
When clover every zephyr mellow,  
That she the dinner-can will bring  
Unto the boy that blows the bellows;

That she will gild his life and make  
His little cottage bright and cheery,  
And smile away misfortune's ache  
Whenever he is sad or dreary.

But in this world 'tis ever so,  
The new love must supplant the older,  
And Flora from his side must go  
To lean upon a dearer shoulder.

Yet when she weds the blacksmith boy,  
For whom her love she cannot smother,  
She'll only follow, in her joy,  
The sweet example of her mother.

#### STATISTICS.

BREWERIES IN EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES.—It appears from statistics recently compiled in Vienna that the number of breweries in Great Britain, in 1880, was 26,114; in Germany, 23,940; in the United States, 3,293; in France, 3,100; in Belgium, 2,500; in Austria-Hungary, 2,297; in Holland, 560; in Russia, 460; in Norway and in Switzerland, 400 each; in Denmark and Sweden, 240 each. The quantity of beer produced in Great Britain was about 49 million hectolitres (the hectolitre is equal to about 22 gallons); in Germany, about 37 mil-

lions; in the United States, 14; in Austro-Hungary, 11; in Belgium, 8; in France, 7; in Russia, 3; in Holland, 2, &c. Russia has the largest breweries, and there is an average production of 6,950 hectolitres to each, Denmark being credited in this respect with 6,250 hectolitres to each brewery; Austria-Hungary, 4,770; the United States, 4,182; France, 2,355; Great Britain, 1,900; Germany, 1,550. Norway has the smallest breweries, with an average of 1,300 hectolitres. The beer production per head of the population is in litres—in Belgium, 151; Great Britain, 140; Germany, 83; Denmark, 76; Holland, 62; Switzerland, 31; the United States, 30; Austria-Hungary, 29; Norway, 23; France, 20; Sweden, 16; Russia, 4; and Italy, 3. But, although Great Britain is below Belgium in this matter, we have a far larger consumption of spirits in addition in comparison with that country.

#### GEMS OF THOUGHT.

We seldom find people ungrateful as long as we are in a condition to render them services.

Old men's eyes are like old men's memories; they are strongest for things a long way off.

The fortunate circumstances of our life are generally found to be of our own producing.

The generality of men have, like plants, latent qualities, which chance brings to light.

Evil would not be half so dangerous if it did not often wear the semblance of virtue.

Unrecomfing forwardness oftener proceeds from ignorance than impudence.

Frugality is founded on the principle that riches have limits.

In the voyage of life we should imitate the ancient mariners, who, without losing sight of the earth, trusted to the heavenly signs for their guidance.

The best armour is discretion; the best adviser, justice; the best act, that prompted by charity; the best companion, the frank friend, who is not afraid to tell us of our faults; but the truest friend is the gold, earned and saved by one's self, the sight of which brings neither blush of shame nor twinge of conscience, this is the friend who ever gives to man unflinching obedience.

#### HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

DOUGHNUTS.—Three eggs, one cup of sugar, one pint of new milk, salt, nutmeg, and flour enough to permit the spoon to stand upright in the mixture; add two teaspoonfuls of baking powder, and beat until very light. Drop by the dessertspoonful into boiling lard. These will not absorb a bit of fat, and are the least pernicious of the doughnut family.

OYSTER PIE.—Butter the inside of a shallow pudding-dish rather thickly, and line the edges with good puff paste; take two dozen fresh oysters, lay them in the dish with alternate slices of calves' sweetbread, previously boiled, and three tablespoonfuls of grated breadcrumbs; season with salt and cayenne, and, if liked, with half a teaspoonful of powdered mace. Strain the oyster liquor, and mix with it an equal quantity of thick cream and a teaspoonful of lemon juice; pour this over the oyster and sweetbread; cover the pie with a lid of paste, and bake half an hour. Good either hot or cold.

POTATO SOUP.—Wash, pare, and boil three potatoes in boiling salted water until very soft. Put one pint of milk, one stalk of celery, and one slice of onion, in a double boiler. Cook one tablespoonful of butter and one of corn starch together, with a little of the milk. Mash the potatoes, add the milk, the corn starch and butter, and let it boil one or two minutes; add one teaspoonful of salt and one saltspoonful of pepper; strain, and serve hot.

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## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**HENRY.**—The word algebra is derived from the Arabic, and comes from terms that mean to bind together, to consolidate, to make strong.

**E. B.**—The essentials to success as a ventriloquist are an ear delicately attuned to the variations of sound produced by distance or direction, and a well-developed faculty of imitation.

**H. F.**—The Muses were the goddesses, in Grecian mythology, of poetry, the arts and sciences. They were nine in number, and their names and provinces were as follows: Clio, the muse of history; Euterpe, of lyric poetry; Thalia, of comedy; Melpomene, of tragedy; Terpsichore, of choral dance and song; Erato, of love poetry; Polyhymnia, of poetry written in praise of the gods and of great men; Urania, of astronomy; and Calliope, of epic poetry.

**EDWARD.**—Stammering can be greatly mitigated, and often cured, by always keeping the lungs full of air while speaking, by speaking slowly, and by reading aloud in a steady, measured voice.

**C. W.**—As you do not like to take iron we can recommend another excellent tonic, which is made by mixing well together the compound tincture of Peruvian bark and compound tincture of cardamoms, each one ounce, and the compound infusion of gentian, one pint. Dose, a wineglassful three times a day, about an hour after each meal.

**ANDREW N.**—Warts can sometimes be removed by common washing soda. Make a strong solution of it, and lave the warts with it for two or three minutes, and let them dry without washing. Keep the water in a bottle and repeat the laving frequently.

**G. W.**—Tobacco which contains a great quantity of nicotine is the best for colouring meerschaums. The pipe is most beautifully coloured when done so gradually by never allowing it to get very hot, and thus expelling the wax from the meerschaum by degrees. When you first use the pipe only half fill it with tobacco, and on every occasion after smoking allow it to cool thoroughly before you use it again. To polish the pipe use the dust of meerschaum.

**VERA.**—Valenciennes is a rich kind of lace made at Valenciennes in France. It has a six-sided mesh formed of two threads partly twisted and plaited, the pattern being worked in the net.

**M. E.**—There is no cure for blushing. It is a very embarrassing habit, but will be overcome as you go more into society and your diffidence wears off.

**ALICE.**—Chalk in its prepared state is good for the teeth. Colour of hair light brown.

**A. G.**—Fig iron is made in a blast furnace. A blast furnace is a tower of brick cased with iron sheets or bands, often sixty or seventy feet high, and sometimes twenty feet across in the widest part. This tower is filled with the ore, coal or coke, and in most cases some limestone. The mass is lit below, a strong blast applied, and as the iron is reduced from the ore it melts and falls to the bottom. It collects there, and is run at regular intervals into moulds.

**G. J.**—The Chiltern Hundreds is a small hilly district extending through part of Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, to which a nominal office is attached in the gift of the crown, the person chosen to fill it being called the Steward of the Chiltern Hundreds. This office is associated with parliamentary usage. A member of the House of Commons cannot directly resign his seat; to accomplish that object indirectly, it is customary for a member wishing to resign to accept a nominal office under the crown, such as the stewardship of the Chiltern Hundreds, whereby his seat in Parliament is vacated. Whenever a member wants to resign, unless the government has special and overruling reasons for wishing him to remain in Parliament, it always gives him the appointment to the Chiltern Hundreds, which enables him to retire to private life.

**THOMAS.**—War was declared in March, 1854. Odessa was bombarded April 22, the Russians were defeated at Alma on September 20; on October 17 began the bombardment of Sebastopol, the battle of Balaklava was fought on the 25th, and the Russians again defeated at Inkerman on November 25. Little was done by the

allies through the winter. On June 18, 1855, the forts Malakoff and Redan were unsuccessfully attacked; on September 5 the French took the Malakoff by storm; the Russians evacuated Sebastopol next day, and peace was made in Paris on March 30, 1856. Lord Raglan commanded the English, Marshal Saint Arnaud and General Pelissier the French, but the names of the truest heroes in battles do not always get recorded in history. Florence Nightingale went to the Crimea in 1854, and opened her hospital at Scutari on November 5 of that year. Several histories of the Crimean war have been published, such as Kinglake's and Russell's. Any publisher can give you a list, with prices, to choose from.

## IN GOLD BROCADE.

DRESSED in the gown her grandame wore,  
A flower-faced girl with sunny hair,  
A fragile girl a breath might crush,  
With serious eyes and graceful air,  
And small hands, rosy-tipped and fair,  
Dressed in the robe her grandame wore.

A robe fit for a Roman wife,  
Or some tall, stately queen of old,  
With flashing eyes and regal brow;  
Not for a girl with hair of gold,  
And eyes like sunshine in a world,  
This robe fit for an Amazon.

A girl, whose silken head but comes  
To your broad shoulder, as you stand  
Looking at her, with furtive smiles  
At her sweet manner, gracious, grand—  
At her arched foot, her dainty hand,  
This girl so fair and small and slight.

Who wears the gown of ancestors,  
A stiff brocade of tawny hues,  
Bestrewn with Oriental palms,  
In crimson, gold, and silver-blues,  
With pensile curls that ever muse,  
This girl in her ancestral gown.

Not e'en the diamond-buckled shoes  
Can make her tall or stately-grand  
With their high heels. With motion slow  
She waves the feathers in her hand,  
And asks you if you ever fanned  
So old a personage before.

A diamond star gleams at her throat,  
That lily-like blooms from her lace—  
The yellow lace, so priceless old,  
That makes more like a rose her face,  
With its soft dimples and its grace—  
Above the diamonds at her throat.

An Indian perfume lingers in  
The heavy folds of this brocade;  
A sluggish, dreaming, Indian scent,  
That makes all modern fancies fade,  
And some dame, gorgeously arrayed,  
Stands near you, with the Indian scent.

Slow shaking from her garments rich:  
An ancient dame, with powdered hair,  
And haughty features cold and stern,  
And all about her jewels rare—  
She stepped down from the picture there,  
The great ancestress of your love.

You stoop and kiss a rosebud mouth  
With lips that have grown half afraid;  
You clasp her close in sudden fear,  
Your little love in old brocade,  
And bid her cease this masquerade,  
And kiss again the rosy mouth.

The shadows of the afternoon  
Have moved toward twilight in the hall;  
One broad, red shaft of sunset-light  
Strikes the old picture on the wall;  
But close beside you nestles all  
That you have won this afternoon.

## PUZZLES.

## LXXI.

## CROSSWORD.

In spring, not in well;  
In yard, not in ell;  
In flour, not in wheat;  
In sole, not in feet;  
In calf, not in cow;  
In din, not in row;  
In wren, not in bird;  
In milk, not in curd;  
In read, not in write;

My whole, a warrior, bring to sight.

## LXXII.

## NUMERICAL.

I consist of 15 letters:  
My 11, 9, 13, 7, 1 is an Irish county;  
My 14, 6, 3, 12 is a Leinster town;  
My 15, 8, 4, 5, 2 is a mean dwelling;  
My 10 is a key in music.  
Entire I was an Irish poet, naturalist and historian.

## LXXIII.

## DIAMOND WORDS.

My 1 is a thousand; my 2 holds liquor; my 3 is far north; my 4 is clothes; my 5 can be corrected; my 6 is a shout of applause; my 7 is chatter; my 8 is scrupulously; my 9 is bad government; my 10 is want of kindly feeling; my 11 is across the ocean; my 12 is from across the ocean; my 13 is clumsily; my 14 is to sprinkle over; my 15 is not in the centre; my 16 is high life; my 17 is a consonant. Centrals form bad government.

## LXXIV.

## CURTAILMENT.

A bird you must find; have it minus the tail,  
A great man you'll behold—unless you fail;  
If again you curtail, you'll instantly see  
What indicates woman the latter will be;  
Once more now curtail, I'm sure that you can,  
And then the sex changes from woman to man.

## LXXV.

## CROSSWORD.

In perch, not in rood;  
In drink, not in food;  
In bat, also in ball;  
In stand, not in fall;  
In sorrow, not in content.  
Entire I'm a musical instrument.

## LXXVI.

## DECAPITATION.

A kind of plant if you behead,  
A kind of shelter you'll have instead.

## LXXVII.

## CROSSWORD.

In basket, not in creel;  
In polka, also in reel;  
In you, not in me;  
In insect, also in bee.  
And if thou bring this word to mind,  
A colour it is—thou wilt find.

## ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S PUZZLES.

## LXVI.

Nothing.

## LXVII.

FEAST	LYDIA	STAND
EIDER	YEARS	TAMAR
ADORE	DANES	AMUSE
SEVEE	IBENE	NESTS
TEES	ASSES	DRESS

## LXVIII.

1. Deer. 2. Room. 3. Pat. 4. Door. 5. Lever. 6. Trap. 7. Drab. 8. Live. 9. Salta.

## LXIX.

V, I, S, A, G, E.

## LXX.

Cow-slip.

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